GRANT WRITING GUIDE

WRITING SUCCESSFUL PROPOSALS

STATE OF LOUISIANA
UNION JUSTICE CONFIDENCE

GRANT WRITING GUIDE
WRITING SUCCESSFUL PROPOSALS

Creating a Summary
Providing Evidence Your Program is Needed
Convincing Funders You Can Do the Job
Putting Your Ideas/Plan Together
How You Will Get the Job Done
Collecting Data to Determine Your Program's Success
Creating a Budget for Your Program

A guidebook developed specifically for those small, community-based, faith-based and minority nonprofit organizations in Louisiana committed to providing valuable social services, leadership and hope to needy citizens in our most vulnerable communities.

INTRODUCTION

In almost every Louisiana community you can find small, community-based, minority and faith-based nonprofit organizations providing basic social services needed by the local community. These organizations are the backbone of community support services in many communities – especially our lower-income communities.

One of the constant challenges that all nonprofits face is funding. This challenge is particularly difficult for small nonprofits that do not have the large paid staffs and other resources that can be focused exclusively on the fundraising effort.

This book, *Grant Writing Guide*, was developed specifically for Louisiana's small nonprofits that provide basic social services in their local communities. It covers the key issues related to writing proposals for social service program funding.

The first section of the book provides a general review of grant writing basics, including a discussion of the variations in grant writing terminology, document organization and level-of-detail requirements.

The remaining sections of the book describe seven distinct information areas that are most commonly required (in a funding proposal) by funders. We will use the following titles for each of these sections: Abstract, Need Statement, Organizational Experience and Capacity, Program Design, Implementation Plan, Program Outcomes, and Budget.

Of course, the actual terminology used to describe these topics will vary from one funder to another. This will be discussed in more detail in Section One — *Grant Writing Basics.*

A Resources Appendix that lists other helpful resources and a Forms Appendix that provides blank samples of useful forms is also included at the end of the book.

Like any other guidebook, this guide is most useful when combined with your own skills and hard work. The State of Louisiana wants to support and strengthen its small nonprofit organizations. We encourage you to use this guide as part of your continuous effort to build the knowledge, expertise and success of your organization.

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PLANNING AHEAD

☐ *It is important to be able to identify funders that are a good match for your organization.*

☐ *The format and amount of information detail required in grant proposals will vary from funder to funder. Good proposal documents comply with all the requirements of the funders.*

☐ *Most funders will require you to address all of these issues in your proposal document:*

- *Who – Your staff and your target client population*

- *What – Your program objectives and activities*

- *When – Program schedules and calendar*

- *Where – Geographic coverage area and service sites*

- *How – Recruiting, implementation plan, performance measurement and sustainability*

OVERVIEW

In Louisiana today there are approximately 400 foundations that provide grant funding to a wide variety of nonprofit organizations (big and small). A significant portion of the grant funds provided by these foundations is given to nonprofits for educational and social service programs.

Additionally, State and local government in Louisiana regularly request proposals or applications from Louisiana's nonprofits to provide education and social service programs. But, competition for foundation and government agency funding is steadily increasing.

Your chances of getting funding for your programs increase significantly if you can write good proposals that completely describe well designed programs. Good proposal writing skills will not overcome the problem of a poorly designed program. And, the best designed program will not be funded if the proposal is vague and confusing to the reviewers. To get the funding you need and want, you will need well designed programs and well written proposals.

This section provides some general information about funding organizations and offers helpful tips for grant writing.

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a. Types of Foundations

There are many different types of foundations and charities that provide funding to nonprofit organizations. A general description of the more common types is provided here.

1. Private Foundations – This type of foundation is typically created by a large donation (endowment) of money from a single individual, family, company or other type of organization. These foundations mainly fund nonprofit organizations that have 501(c)(3) status with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). There are three different kinds of private foundations:

- **Family Foundations** – are created by endowments from an individual or an individual family. A large number of independent foundations are family foundations. They are controlled or strongly influenced by the donor family. These foundations vary in size. Many are small foundations that distribute limited funds each year. Others are larger, distributing dozens (sometimes hundreds) of grants each year.

- **Independent Foundations** – are sometimes started by individuals or families but they are not heavily influenced by the donors. Other independent foundations are created when a nonprofit company sells its business assets to a for-profit company. The money received through the sale is often placed in an independent foundation as a way to distribute the money back to the community.

- **Corporate Foundations** – are set up by for-profit businesses as a way to fund the corporation's charitable giving.

2. Community Foundations – Continuously build their endowments by soliciting money from many different sources including donations from individuals, estates, other foundations, businesses, etc. Community foundations will fund programs in a specific city or region. These foundations help donors that want to give back to the community without going through the cost of setting up their own independent foundation.

3. Public Foundations – Are a lot like community foundations. Public foundations will often operate their own programs in the community in addition to distributing grant funds to other nonprofits.

All of these different types of foundations have one thing in common – they distribute grants to nonprofit organizations to fund programs that help the community. More information about Louisiana foundations can be found in the Resources Appendix at the back of this book.

b. What Foundations Look For

The amount of money that foundations distribute through grants has grown tremendously in the last 10 to 15 years. Throughout the United States there are over 50,000 active foundations that gave a total of over $27 billion in the year 2000. The foundations in Louisiana gave almost $87 million. These organizations fund all types of charitable, educational, social, scientific, literary, religious and cultural programs.

Are You a 501(c)(3) Nonprofit Organization?

When we use the term nonprofit organization in this book we are talking about organizations that have been classified by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) as a 501(c)(3). The 501(c)(3) organization is exempt from federal income taxes and allowed to receive tax-deductible contributions from individuals and organizations.

Mostly, foundations prefer that their grants support established

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501(c)(3) organizations. If your organization is not a 501(c)(3), you may want to discuss this with you legal counsel.

Grants are Temporary

Raising money through foundation grants can be a very cost-effective way of getting funds for your programs. The size of the grant award can be significant compared to the time it takes to create a good funding proposal.

However, it is not easy. Many other nonprofits are competing for the funds you are asking for. Even when you are awarded a grant, it is important to remember that grants are temporary. Most foundations will not make long-term financial commitments to your organization.

Investment not Entitlement

For a long time nonprofits that received funds from foundations (and government agencies) to provide social service programs were not held to the highest standard of performance and accountability. Today that is changing.

Foundations and government agencies are treating the money they give to nonprofits the same way business investors treat their investments. No longer is it good enough for a nonprofit to just have good intentions to help.

Your "investors" want to make sure they are investing in an organization that has the demonstrated ability to manage its programs and its finances. They will also want to see your program goals and your plan to measure and report your performance. It is unlikely that you will get funding if the "investors" are not convinced that you can spend the money wisely to produce real benefits for the community.

Solutions not Problems

Foundations and government agencies know quite well all the general social and educational challenges that we face in Louisiana. However, they are not interested in blindly throwing money at these problems. Their real interest is to find nonprofits that have designed specific, realistic solutions that will positively impact a target population of people.

c. Keys to Successful Proposals

How can you maximize your success in obtaining grant funds? There is no magic formula that guarantees success. But, a lot has been learned about how foundations (and government agencies) award funds. Here are some key issues to consider:

Identify Funders that are a Good Match for You: There are thousands of foundations out there. Many of them will not be a good match for your organization because of the type of programs you provide, or your geographic location, or your size, or a large list of other reasons. For example: if your mission and your programs are focused on children, find funders that specifically identify children services as a funding priority. Identify funders that have awarded grants to fund programs similar to your programs.

Get to Know Potential Funders: After you have identified funders that are a good match for your organization, you want to begin building a relationship with them. Go and meet with them to talk about your programs, your organization and the benefits you provide the community. Share with them any material you have about your organization – newspaper articles, brochures, newsletters, etc. Ask them for their insights and guidance with regard to developing a proposal for funding.

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Avoid Duplication of Services: Funders will want to avoid giving money to you (or any other nonprofit) if they believe your program represents a duplication of services that are already available to the community. You will need to clearly demonstrate that your program will address a need in the community that is not being addressed by any other organization or community resource.

Partnerships with Other Nonprofits: There are many small nonprofits in Louisiana. Small size can sometimes limit your resources and your range of experience. You can overcome these limits somewhat by partnering with one or more other nonprofits to deliver specific programs. Funders like to see proposals that represent real partnerships among organizations in the community.

Good partnerships reassure funders that you are focused on the best interest of the community.

Strong Board and Management: Funders are looking for nonprofits that are led by strong boards and competent managers. They want to see evidence that you have managed your money wisely in the past. They want to see board members who are real leaders rooted in the community and have a wide range of experience and expertise that could help your nonprofit.

Write a Strong Proposal: Some foundations want you to prepare fairly short proposals. Funders will also want you to attach some specific information about your organization to the proposal. You may be thinking – that's easy! Actually, it is not easy to write everything they want to know using a relatively limited number of pages. It is a skill that you develop and refine over time.

Some funders will provide very specific guidelines and requirements that must be included in your proposal. For example: the funder may have requirements for program design or performance measurement or staffing, etc. Ignoring or challenging these requirements in your proposals is counterproductive.

Your proposal must be clear and interesting to the reader also. If the funder can not understand your proposal you will not get funded. Later in this section we will review in detail all the basic elements of a complete proposal and some writing tips.

Follow-up Your Proposal: It is a good idea to follow-up your proposal by making a call to the potential funder. You can confirm that they have your proposal and ask them if there are any questions or needed additional information. However, you do not want to overdo your follow-up. You should not constantly call a funder while your proposal is being considered – be considerate of their time and schedules. Some funders publish a schedule of events that identifies when proposals are due, when the proposals will be evaluated, etc. If a schedule of events is available, you will want to time your follow up to be considerate of the funder's schedule of events.

Thank the Funders: Always thank the funders for considering your proposal – regardless of the outcome. Like every other nonprofit that requests grant funds regularly, you will receive more rejection letters than grant awards. Sometimes very good proposals are not funded simply because there was not enough money for all the good proposals.

Do Not Give Up: Often it will take several attempts to succeed in getting a grant. Keep up with your potential funders – and keep trying.

Evaluate Your Proposals: When you receive a denial use that opportunity to evaluate and (if necessary) improve your proposals.

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Many funders are very willing to give you feedback regarding the completeness and the clarity of your proposal documents. Ask them how you can improve your proposal.

Create a Strong Relationship with Your Funders: More than anything else, funders want to know that their grants are appreciated and beneficial to the community. When you are awarded a grant, stay in touch with your funders throughout the grant period. Send them regular updates – reports, photos, etc.

Many grants require periodic update reports and measurement of results. Make sure you deliver required reports that are complete and timely. Any chance you have of getting another grant from this funder will be dependent upon how well you perform now.

d. Ten Most Common Reasons Why Proposals are Rejected*

1. The organization does not meet our priorities. Make sure there is a good match between your program and the funding priorities of the foundation. Even if the quality and clarity of your proposal is perfect, funders will not fund proposals that do not match their funding priorities.

2. The organization is not located in our geographic area of funding. Some foundations will only fund in a specific geographic region. Make sure you are in that region before writing a proposal.

3. The proposal does not follow our prescribed format. Follow the instructions carefully. You must write your proposal using the exact format and order (and length) that the funder requires. Ask questions if you are confused. After you have written your proposal (and added

required attachments) go back through the proposal instructions to make certain that your document meets all requirements.

4. The proposal is poorly written and difficult to understand. Funders rely on proposals to make decisions about who will receive their grants. They are unlikely to take a chance on your organization if your proposal does not clearly describe the community need, your program solution and your ability to perform. It is important to avoid the use of unexplained technical words, phrases and acronyms that the average person will not understand. Get some experienced reviewers to look at your proposal before it is submitted.

5. The proposed budget and grant request is not within our funding range. Your budget request could be too big or too small for a particular funder. Look at the average size of the grants that they award. If the funder typically make grants under $50,000 that is probably not a good match for your $250,000 proposal.

6. We don't know these people — are they credible? If possible meet with the funder before you submit your proposal to establish the credibility of your board and your organization. Your board must play a role in helping your nonprofit establish credibility. Establishing credibility takes more than just polite introductions. It will take time and honest discussions to build a relationship based on mutual interests (helping others) and trust. (Note: building these relationships is important – but must also be combined with a competent staff and well designed programs that are properly matched to real community needs.)

7. The proposal doesn't seem urgent — and I'm not sure it will have an impact. Your proposal needs to be convincing. Your arguments need to be clear and the readers must be able to see a strong

connection between your program activities and significant community benefits. Using a writing style that grabs the attention of the reader is important also. However, you do not want to exaggerate the problem and describe a hopeless situation. Funders have no interest in funding a situation that can not be improved. Find expert writers to help with your proposal language.

8. The objectives and plan of action of the project greatly exceed the budget and timelines for implementation. You need to be realistic. Make sure your goals, objectives and activities are reasonable and realistic for the budget and the grant time period. If your proposal is exaggerated it will not be taken seriously.

9. We've allocated all the money for this grant cycle. There will always be more requests than grants awarded. Do not take it personally. Evaluate your proposal, make improvements and try again at the next grant cycle.

10. There is insufficient evidence that the program will become self-sufficient after the grant is completed. Many foundations want to know how the program will survive after their grant funds are spent. Make sure you have a longer-term plan for funds included in your proposal.

*Source: *2002 Louisiana Funding Guide*
        Louisiana Association of Nonprofit Organizations

e. Grant Writing Tips

Writing your first grant proposal can be a very scary task. Many people lack confidence in their writing skills. Do not be intimidated. Writing a grant proposal just takes time and concentration. You can develop acceptable proposals if make a real commitment of time and energy. The following general tips will help you.

• **Make Sure You are Eligible** – Your first step is to determine if your organization and/or your program is a good fit for the grant opportunity you are considering. You do not want to waste your time and effort developing a proposal if you do not meet the eligibility qualifications. Be honest with yourself. Move on to other opportunities if this one is not a good fit. Foundations and government agencies will define the organizational and program eligibility requirements in their proposal packets.

• **Create a Checklist Before You Start Writing** – Every foundation and government agency that makes grants will have its own list or description of required proposal elements. Sometimes those lists are clearly organized and defined in their proposal packet and other times the required elements are spread throughout the proposal packet. Carefully review the whole proposal packet and create your own checklist of required elements. You can check off elements as you complete them.

• **Use Plain Language** – Do not assume that the reviewers of your proposal understand any slang or technical jargon related to the programs you offer. Also, avoid complex words and flowery language. Reviewers are not impressed with big words and complicated sentences. Your goal is to get the reviewers to clearly and easily understand your request. Simple and plain is better.

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Ignoring Submission Requirements

It is very important to comply with all the submission requirements. It would be a shame to spend a lot of time and effort on a proposal only to have it disqualified from consideration because you did not comply with one or more of the submission requirements.

• **Comply with Length and Format Requirements** – Some funders will include proposal length restrictions and format guidelines in their proposal packets. For example, a funder may request that you include an executive summary that is limited to 1 page or a statement of need that is no longer than 2 pages. They may also request proposal elements in a specific order.

Make sure your proposal complies with any length restrictions and format guidelines. Even if there are no specific written requirements in the proposal packet, you want to find out what are the preferences of the funders. Just contact them and ask about their expectations.

• **Easy to Read** – you can make your proposal easier to read by:

  • Using short paragraphs

  • Creating clear titles and subtitles to label each section

  • Avoid overuse of bold text, all capital letters and underlines – do not try to emphasize everything

  • Do not try to cram two pages of information on 1 page – use reasonable page margins and spacing between your paragraphs

  • Font size should be 11 points or larger

• **No Desperation** – You want your proposal to grab the attention of the reviewers and you want to make a compelling case for funding, but you do not want to give the reviewers the impression that you are desperate. Reviewers are likely to see that as a sign of organizational instability or weakness.

• **Keep it Real** – You do not want to embellish or exaggerate any part of your proposal. Reviewers know that if it looks too good to be true, it probably is.

• **Find a Good Editor** – Some people are better writers than others. If you are not a confident writer find someone you know who is. Ask them to review and edit your proposal to improve the organization and clarity of the document, word usage, sentence structure, style, grammar, spelling, etc. A poorly written document will hurt your chances of success.

• **Quality Materials** – Your proposal document does not need to be fancy but it should be clean and neat. Use good quality paper and get a good clean copy from your printer.

• **Comply with Submission Requirements** – Each foundation and government agency has its own proposal submission instructions. Typical types of requirements you will find include:

  • Number of proposal copies that you must submit

  • Bound or unbound (many funders want unbound copies)

  • Submission deadlines (specific date and time of day)

  • Submission address (where to deliver your proposal)

  • Submission methods (in-person delivery, mail, etc.)

  • Cover Letters or Forms (some funders have their own cover form or letter that they require you to complete and place in the front of your proposal)

  • Budget Forms (some funders will require you to use their budget worksheets and forms)

  • Attachments (specific information they want attached to your proposal, some examples are financial statements, legal documents, etc.)

  • Any Other Submission Requirements (before you submit your proposal, make a checklist of all the submission requirements)

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Grant Writing Dos and Don'ts

DO

Make sure you are eligible. Read the entire grant application to make sure it is right for the type of program you have or have in mind.

Follow all instructions for page limits, font requirements, spacing, and other specifications.

Make sure you organize the grant narrative to address explicitly any stated selection criteria. If criteria are presented, your grant will probably be rated on how well you address these criteria.

Make sure you address each item the grant asks for. Make it easy for the reviewer to check off each requirement without having to hunt for information.

DO

Ask for enough funding, based on what the grant provides or recommends.

Write clearly for the reviewers. Use headers and short sentences and paragraphs.

Have someone else (someone not involved in the process) read your grant.

Provide a budget for each year for the amount you are requesting from the funder. Be careful to review any matching requirements and make sure you can meet them. If budget forms are required make sure you fill them out completely. Check your addition!

Sign your original application in blue ink and submit enough copies.

DON'T

Don't try to "fit" your program to a grant if it is not a natural match. If you do, chances are that your application will not be competitive.

Don't exceed the page-limit recommendation for your proposal's narrative text or get too creative with fonts and margins to give yourself more room. Your reviewers will notice.

Don't be vague about goals, objectives and intended outcomes in the narrative.

Don't forget to include critical information required on forms and any other assurances necessary.

DON'T

Don't ask for an exorbitant amount of funding especially if you are seeking funding for only one site.

Don't assume that the readers know anything in advance about your community or program.

Don't rely on computer spell-checks and grammar-checks. They do not find all the errors.

Don't assume the readers will know what you meant to say if you make a mistake. If you mistakenly ask for less money than your budget details, you may be awarded only the lower amount.

Don't submit additional material after you have already sent in your application. It may not be considered in the review process.

f. Writing Proposals for Government Agencies

Government agencies often require proposals that are more detailed and complex than the average foundation proposal. Government agencies almost always develop and publish written proposal packets that describe all the requirements for submitting a proposal. These proposal packets have been given several different names, including Request for Proposals (RFP) and Request for Applications.

Proposal packets for some federal grants can be 100+ pages long. Proposals from Louisiana State agencies typically run 20 to 30 pages long. All of these proposal packets from government agencies will include very specific instructions and timelines that must be followed. Failure to comply with any of the stated requirements could disqualify your proposal from consideration.

The best way to find current proposal opportunities for specific government agencies is to visit their websites regularly. The Resources Appendix at the end of this book lists relevant web addresses for some key government agencies.

Performance-based Contracts

The State of Louisiana publishes a number of Request for Applications and Request for Proposals for different types of social service programs (After-school, Teen Pregnancy Prevention, etc.) that are not really grants. They are called performance-based contracts.

The difference between a grant and a performance-based contract is significant. Grant money is typically awarded in lump sums before the program work is delivered. In other words you get your money before you incur the program expenses.

A performance-based contract pays you periodically (monthly, quarterly, etc.) for the services you have actually already delivered. This means you will incur the expenses before you receive the revenue from the State. And, if you deliver significantly less service than you planned in your program budget the State will pay you less than the maximum amount defined on your contract.

The traditional payment method used by the State is a monthly expense reimbursement method. Each month you submit an invoice and supporting documentation (proof of expenditures) requesting reimbursement of expenses you incurred during that month. Allowed expenses that are properly documented are reimbursed. However, there is a movement away from this type of reimbursement method.

What is a unit-cost approach? A unit-cost approach means that you will take your total proposal budget and divide that number by your total number of planned service units (for the whole contract period) to arrive at a total cost per unit of service delivered.

CALCULATING UNIT COST FOR YOUR PROGRAM

Your Total Proposal Budget

DIVIDED BY

Your Total Number of Planned Service Units

EQUALS

Your Total Cost Per Unit of Service

What are your service units? Service units can be any type of service volume that can be measured. Here are two common examples – # of client contact hours per month, # of clients enrolled/participating per month (participation would have to be defined and documented).

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If you are planning to develop a proposal budget using the unit-cost approach, contact the appropriate State agency to gain a better understanding of what would be an appropriate unit-cost that you could use in your proposal.

Here is an example of a unit-cost calculation for an After-school program:

UNIT COST EXAMPLE
LET'S ASSUME

Your Total Program Budget equals $50,000

Your Total Program Capacity is ....50 students

Your Program Calendar plans for ....200 contact hours per student

HERE IS HOW YOU COULD CALCULATE A UNIT COST FOR THIS PROGRAM

50 students X 200 contact hours = 10,000 total contact hours

$50,000 total budget divided by 10,000 total contact hours

EQUALS

$5.00 per contact hour

Using this example, you will only bill the contracting agency for the actual number of contact hours you deliver in the billing period at a price of $5.00 per contact hour.

BILLING PERIOD CALCULATION

Total contact hours

actually delivered

during this billing period 1,200

Your established unit-cost..............................$5.00 per contact hour

1,200 total contact hours in billing period X $5.00 unit-cost

EQUALS

$6,000 total bill for this billing period

Remember, a unit-cost contract requires that you invoice the State only for the service units actually delivered. When this unit-cost method is used, invoices for reimbursement of line items in your budget will not be accepted – all reimbursement to you under the contract will come through the unit-cost amounts.

Finally, the total of all the invoices (combined) you send to the contracting agency can not exceed your contract (maximum amount) total. In other words, if you have a unit-cost contract for a total of $50,000 you can not submit invoices that total more than $50,000 regardless of how many actual service units you deliver.

How are the Winners Picked?

Most government agencies use a point system (scoring rubric) in an effort to evaluate each proposal objectively. The scoring rubric includes a list of all the important required elements of a proposal. Each element is given a possible score (possible points that can be earned). The agency will assemble a review panel to evaluate and score each proposal received. The proposals with the highest scores are awarded the available funds. Government agencies that use scoring rubrics will sometimes include them in their Requests for Proposals (RFPs).

Scoring rubrics can be extremely valuable tools that can help you:

- Evaluate the fit between your organization and the RFP. Does this type of program fit with your mission, vision and strategic goals?

- Determine if your organization can comply with all the requirements listed in the scoring rubric. Can your program and your proposal document meet the demands of the scoring rubric?

- Outline your proposal document to include all items and issues listed in the scoring rubric.

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Reviewing the scoring rubric before you start spending a lot time on the development of a proposal is a wise investment.

Here is a partial sample of the scoring rubric included in a recent Request for Proposals issued by the Louisiana Department of Social Services for their Parenting/Fatherhood Initiative.

This partial scoring rubric sample addresses the *Need for the Project* element of your proposal. This information tells you specifically what *Need for the Project* information the State is looking for in your proposal.

For example: the 3rd statement in that section says - *Applicant describes in detail the specific needs of the fathers in the community.* Your proposal can earn 3 points by clearly identifying and explaining the specific needs of the fathers you will be targeting for your program services. You will need to provide credible evidence (data) that the fathers you intend to serve in you community have those specific needs that you identify. Providing local data/evidence is crucial to demonstrating the need - state, regional or national data is not sufficient.

SCORING RUBRIC
Total Points Possible = 100 Points

Need for the Project: 15 possible points

	Possible Points	Points Awarded
Applicant describes demographics and economics of fathers targeted for service and number of individuals to be served.	3	
Applicant describes how proposed project will address the identified need.	3	
Applicant describes in detail the specific needs of the fathers in the community.	3	
Applicant provides strong evidence that fathers would participate in proposed service.	3	
Applicant provides evidence that the identified need exists based on research, surveys or other types of reliable data.	3	
Total	15	

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This section of the scoring rubric sample addresses the *Program Design* element of your proposal. The statements in this section tell you exactly what the State is looking for in your program design.

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Program Design: 25 possible points

	Possible Points	Points Awarded
Applicant has clearly identified goals and outcomes that are related to the needs of fathers.	5	
Applicant has clearly described the proposed service to include geographic area to be served, targeted population and identified the number of individuals to be served.	5	
Applicant describes the activities with necessary program components that will be performed in order to meet stated goals and outcomes.	5	
Applicant describes clearly how the proposed service delivery shall be utilized by the targeted population.	3	
Applicant is able to leverage existing community and state resources, specifically legal aid and child support enforcement services.	5	
Applicant's proposed service is creative, and innovative, based on best practices and maximizes flexibility.	2	
Total	25	

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For example: the 1st statement in this section states - *Applicant has clearly identified goals and outcomes that are related to the needs of the fathers*. Your proposal can earn 5 points by clearly defining specific goals and outcomes for your program that address the specific needs of your target population of fathers. To earn those points you must make solid connections between the needs you identified and your program's goals and outcomes. Let's assume one of the needs you identified is employment. An example of a program goal connected to that need would be for participating fathers to complete a job readiness program.

The scoring rubric is the "test" you must pass to be seriously considered for funding. The higher your test score, the better your chances of being funded.

In addition to using the rubric before you start writing a proposal, use the scoring rubric as a final checklist to evaluate your completed proposal before you submit it to the State. The key is to be tough and honest in evaluating your own proposal. Going through this exercise gives you one last chance to make your proposal as complete and clear as possible.

When evaluating your proposal documents, make sure they are written in plain language. Avoid complex, technical language and program-specific terminology (lingo). You should not assume that the reviewers of your proposal are familiar with the lingo commonly used in your program areas.

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g. Grant Writing Basics Checklist

Here is a checklist you can use to evaluate your grant writing basics:

GRANT WRITING BASICS CHECKLIST

☐ Has your organization applied for and obtained 501(c)(3) nonprofit status from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS)?

☐ Do you have a process established to identify funders (giving foundations, government agencies, etc.) that are a good match for your organization and the services you provide?

☐ Does your organization have a plan to actively pursue a variety of funding sources?

☐ Do any members of your staff and/or board have good grant writing skills? If no, have you identified outside volunteers or consultants that could fulfill your grant writing needs?

☐ Are members of your board and senior staff actively working to develop and maintain productive relationships with potential funders?

☐ Have you attempted to get feedback from funding organizations that have rejected proposals submitted by your organization?

A complete copy of this (and all forms in this book) can be found in the Forms Appendix and on the CD in the front pocket of this workbook.

TWO

SECTION TWO: ABSTRACT

SECTION TWO: ABSTRACT

PLANNING AHEAD

- ☐ *An abstract is a quick, one-page summary of the program or service that you are proposing.*

- ☐ *A good abstract should include highlights of important elements in your proposal – who you are, your experience, the need for your service, what you propose to do, what will be accomplished and how much it will cost.*

- ☐ *A well-written abstract can make an immediate impression on a potential funder and can convince the reader to continue reviewing the rest of your ideas. A poorly written abstract will lose a reviewer's interest and could prevent the reader from reviewing the rest of your proposal.*

- ☐ *It is a good idea to create a short summary of your proposal and place it in the front part of your proposal document even if an abstract is not required.*

Overview

Many funders will request that you provide an overview (executive summary) or abstract of your proposal in the very front of your proposal document. The abstract is a very brief but important element of a proposal. It introduces your organization and your proposed program. Its purpose is to create interest and set the tone for the rest of your proposal document. This section describes the basics of developing a good abstract (or summary) for your proposal.

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SECTION TWO: ABSTRACT

a. What is the Abstract?

The abstract (or overview) is a brief summary of your entire proposal that fits on one page. It is a quick explanation of your proposal that includes:

- **The Need** – What is the specific unmet need, who will this program benefit?

- **The Program** – What is your program and how will it address the need you have identified? How many people will you serve, where will this program be located, and how will you staff the program?

- **The Money** – What amount of money are you asking for (over what period of time), and how will you continue this program beyond the funding period.

- **The Organization** – Your organization's mission, vision and a brief history. Also describe your expertise and ability to implement this program.

The abstract is important because it is your first opportunity to grab the reader's attention. Even if the funder does not require an abstract, you may want to provide one anyway. The abstract is your chance to make a positive first impression. It should be interesting and reassuring. Funders that require abstracts typically will not read the rest of your proposal if they are not impressed with your abstract.

Your abstract must convince the reader that you understand the program need described in the RFP and that your proposed program will effectively address that need. The following information should be included in your proposal abstract:

- **Identify Yourself**
  Name your organization and describe its credentials and experience.

- **Statement of Need**
  Describe the problem (including local facts) your program will address and the target population that will be helped.

- **Proposed Program**
  Summarize the services included in your program. Define how many clients you can serve and how you will serve them.

- **Program Objectives**
  List the measurable results your program will achieve.

- **Implementation Plan**
  Provide a summary description of how, when, and where your program will be implemented.

- **Performance Measurement**
  Describe how you will measure your results.

- **Budget**
  Define the amount of money you are requesting.

b. Good and Poor Abstract Examples

Look at the following abstract examples – a good example and a poor example. The good example is complete and specific. It provides summary information that addresses all four of the key areas, including: *The Need, The Program, The Money and The Organization* – and it fits on 1 page.

Abstract – GOOD Example

Friends of Children is a nonprofit group established in 1993 that provides programs to support the social, intellectual, and physical development of underprivileged elementary school children. The number of poor, at-risk children in Anywhere Parish is very high (nearly 45% of the area children live in poverty) and the percentage of elementary school age students in the parish being retained due to LEAP test failure is nearly 30%. Further, the number of juvenile arrests in the area has increased steadily over the past 10 years.

Our proposed project will create an after-school program using innovative learning techniques aimed at enhancing creativity and academic skills, and promoting the physical and social development of participants. The target population is at-risk students from low income, predominantly single-parent families in Anywhere Parish (nearly 42% of all households). The target number of individuals to be served is 120.

Our program will operate Monday through Friday from 2:30 – 5:30 pm in the community center, next to Anywhere Elementary School. Trained activity directors will supervise all activities and tutors will provide homework assistance and tutoring in all academic areas. Activity directors also will offer fun learning, sports and creative activities to all students. Students will receive nutritious snacks each day and have the opportunity to participate in cultural activities every week.

The specific objectives of the program are to (1) improve student scores on standardized academic proficiency tests, and improve report card grades in math and reading, (2) support and develop student strengths through a variety of learning activities, and (3) enhance student social skills and physical well-being.

The impact of our after-school program will be measured through test scores on standardized academic achievement tests and review of student report cards. Additional outcomes will be assessed through parent and student surveys and focus groups, and an independent assessment of our program that will be conducted by members of the Education Department at Anywhere State University.

The program will run the entire academic school year, from August 31, 2002 through June 6, 2003. This program will be supported by a partnership we have formed with a local community outreach program and the local newspaper. Friends of Children is requesting $137,790 for this project.

Abstract – POOR Example

Friends of Children helps underprivileged elementary school children. There currently is a need for after-school programs in Anywhere Parish, like the one Friends of Children would like to provide.

Such a program will help at-risk children do better in school, learn important interpersonal skills, and become better citizens.

The after-school program will target kids in Anywhere Parish and will operate after-school on Monday through Friday in the local community center.

Trained adults will provide homework assistance in all classroom topics, as well as provide games and fun activities.

The objectives of the program are to make students better learners and improve their social skills and personal well-being.

The impact of the after-school program will be evaluated by looking at student grades and satisfaction with the program.

Friends of Children is requesting $137,790 for this project.

The poor example is incomplete – it does not provide the same level of detail found in the good example. This (poor) example does not grab the attention of the reader. There is no good description of the need, the organization and its mission is not well defined, and no basic details of the program are provided.

SECTION TWO: ABSTRACT

c. Writing Tips

- Write the abstract after all of the other sections of the proposal have been written. Remember, your abstract is a summary of your whole proposal. It is a lot easier to write the summary after you have written all of the other, more detailed parts of your proposal.

- Use local data and statistics to define the need for your program. Use hard data and facts rather than emotional appeals.

- Make it clear that your proposed program is realistic and your objectives are attainable. Do not overstate the problem and do not oversell your organization as the solution to the problem. Do not exaggerate your goals and program objectives.

- Be specific in describing your implementation plan, including the dates, times, and location of the proposed program. Give a summary description of how your program will work.

- Use everyday words, simple sentences and short paragraphs. Avoid using program jargon.

d. Abstract Checklist

Here is a checklist you can use to evaluate the abstracts you write:

ABSTRACT CHECKLIST

☐ Is your abstract short and to the point – one page or less?

☐ Does your abstract tell who you are and describe your experience or qualifications to deliver the program you are proposing?

☐ Does your abstract describe and provide specific evidence of a specific local need for your program?

☐ Is the target population for your program described and linked to the defined local need?

☐ Have you defined the total number of participants you can serve in this program?

☐ Is your program clearly described? What services? Where? When? How?

☐ Does your abstract include your program's measurable objectives and a description of how you will measure your results?

☐ Does your abstract identify how much money you are requesting?

A complete copy of this (and all forms in this book) can be found in the Forms Appendix and on the CD in the front pocket of this workbook.

THREE

SECTION THREE: NEED STATEMENT

SECTION THREE: NEED STATEMENT

☐ *Defining the local need for your proposed service helps funders understand how your idea will help address the problem(s) that you have identified.*

☐ *Your need statement should always be presented using hard evidence such as statistics or evaluation findings. The hard evidence helps legitimize your claim that a real need exists in your community.*

☐ *Make sure you localize the need for your proposed services. Being too general suggests you do not have a clear understanding of the need in your community.*

☐ *Your need statement should convince funders that the problem you present is not insurmountable or beyond hope. You must present a need that can be effectively addressed through the services you are proposing.*

☐ *A simple process for developing your need statement includes:*

• *Make a list of all funder requirements (a description of all data and information the funders want to see)*

• *Develop a plan to collect this data and information*

• *Collect the data and incorporate it into a written need statement*

Overview

Funders will commonly ask for proposals to define a particular community need or problem that your proposed program will address. Creating a *need statement* is your opportunity to demonstrate that you have a real problem in your community that is in line with the RFP. This section provides information that can help you develop good need statements for your proposals.

CONTENTS OF THIS SECTION

A Poor Match

Before you write proposals for significant funding to address a specific need, you want to make sure that your organization is well positioned to address that need. In other words, your organization should have a mission, real expertise and relevant experience that is well matched with that particular community need.

a. Why is the Need Statement Important?

The *need statement* describes the problem(s) your program is designed to address. It should educate the reader about how serious the problem is in your community. Remember, funders want to spend their money on real solutions to serious problems.

The key is for you to write a need statement that accurately paints the picture of a problem that urgently needs attention. You should assume that the readers (review panel) are unfamiliar with the relevant issues and problems in your community.

Your challenge is to provide them with hard evidence that will convince them that your community needs your proposed program and that your organization is best positioned to provide those program services. Even if the RFP does not require a distinct "need" section in your proposal, you may want to provide this information to make a good case for your proposed program.

Before you write proposals for significant funding to address a specific need, you want to make sure that your organization is well positioned to address the need. In other words, your organization should have a mission, real expertise and relevant experience that is well matched with this particular community need.

Local Data Makes the Case

Making a strong case that a need exists in your community requires hard, accurate, and up-to-date data from credible sources. National, regional and statewide data is not sufficient to make your case. You can use a few of those statistics as background information but you need more. You must have local data and evidence that describes how the target population in your community is suffering from the problem you describe.

For example: statistics that show low performance of middle school children in Louisiana and (even) your local school district are not sufficient to justify your proposed After-school program for *ABC Middle School* students. You need to provide statistics and other evidence that makes the case that *ABC Middle School* students need and want your program.

Your need statement should also use convincing language but should not be exaggerated. Making wild, overstated claims that go well-beyond the data will give the impression that you are trying to create a need where none really exists.

Writing a complete and convincing need statement lets the review panel know that you understand the issues facing your community. It also tells them you have done your homework and you know how to address this need that is facing your community.

Your need statements do not have to be long and drawn out. In fact, if your need statements are too complicated and loaded down with statistics you could confuse and overwhelm the readers with information. The important thing is to identify the most important facts and statistics and use them to make a straightforward, powerful statement supporting the need for your program.

The issue of "need" is often included in the scoring criteria used to evaluate/score proposals. If your proposal does not have a strong need statement, you will receive low scores in that area. A weak need statement could negatively affect the credibility of your proposal – and your chances for being funded.

SECTION THREE: NEED STATEMENT

b. Flowchart of Steps to Develop Your Need Statement

Writing a complete need statement will require four basic steps of work.

START HERE

STEP 1   **Create a List**
- Create a list of everything the funder wants you to include in your *need statement*

STEP 2   **Develop a Plan**
- Develop a plan to collect the data, statistics and other information required to build your *need statement*

STEP 3   **Collect Your Data**
- Collect data, statistics and other information that addresses the need issues described in the RFP

STEP 4   **Write a Convincing Need Statement**
- Use your data and program expertise to build a strong case for your program

SECTION THREE: NEED STATEMENT

The following flowchart describes each of these steps in more detail.

Create a List

• Create a list of everything the funder wants you to include in your *need statement*

RFPs (request for proposals) will often describe specifically what the
funder is looking for in your need statement.
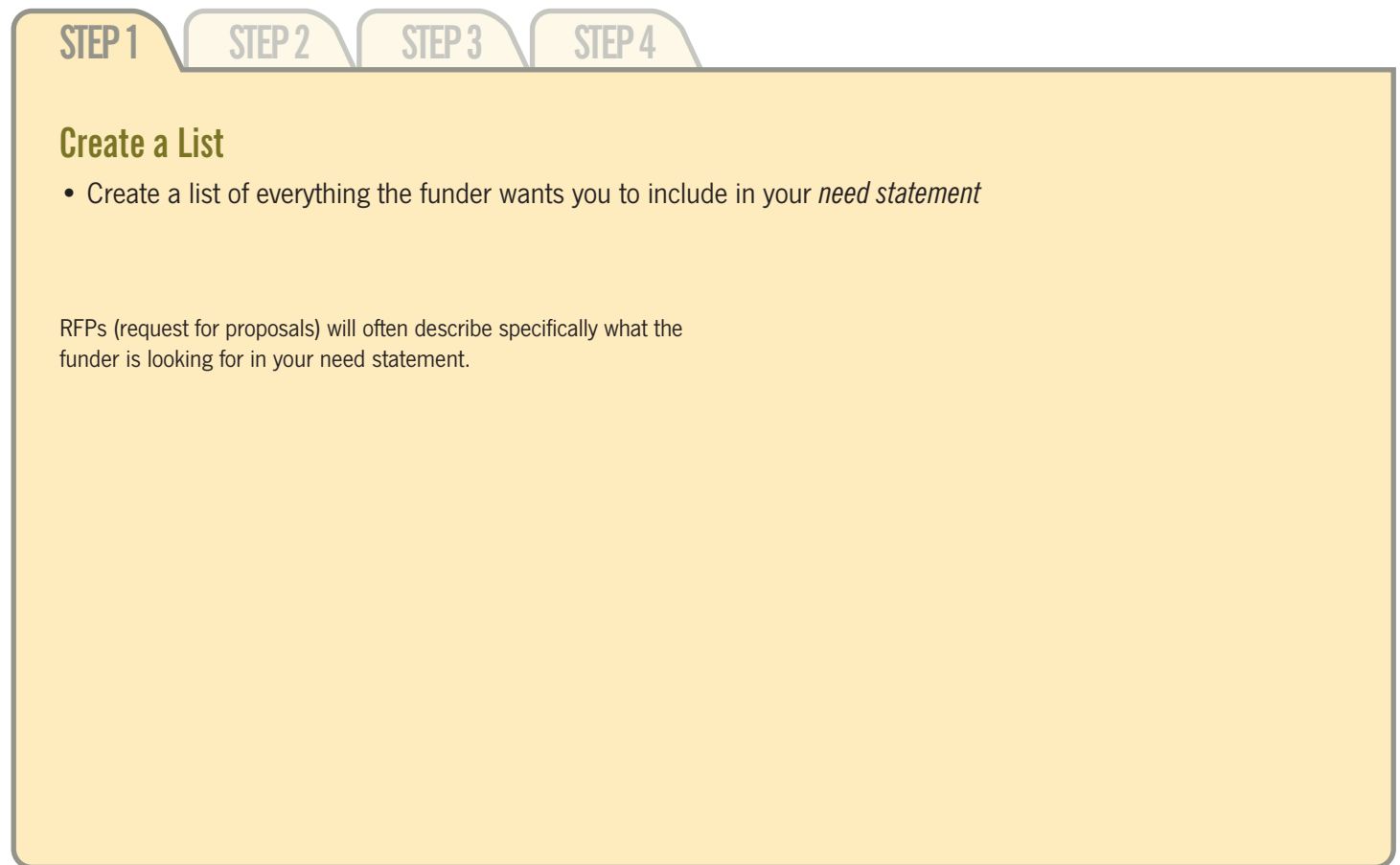
SECTION THREE: NEED STATEMENT

Where to Look for Data

- *Census Data (www.census.gov)*

- *State Agencies (e.g., Department of Education, Social Services, Labor, Health and Hospitals, Economic Development)*

- *Local Governments (e.g., police, school boards, planning commissions, social service departments)*

- *Local Community Groups (e.g., chamber of commerce)*

- *Louisiana Colleges and Universities (Departments of Social Welfare, Education, Community Development, etc.)*

- *Local, State or National Foundations (that fund programs like yours)*

- *State, Regional and National Associations (focused on the problems addressed by your program)*

- *Self-generated data (e.g., from your past projects)*

  See the Resources Appendix in the back of this book for more information on data and information sources.

| STEP 1 | STEP 2 | STEP 3 | STEP 4 |

Develop a Plan

- Develop a plan to collect the data, statistics and other information required to build your *need statement*

Look at each item on the list you created in step one. For each item, ask yourself these questions:

- What data, statistics or other information do I need to accurately describe this item?

- Where will I look to find what each item I need?

(Sometimes the RFP will refer you to useful websites that offer relevant data and information you could use in your proposal.)

KEY POINT

Your data collection plan does not need to be complicated. A simple plan divided into 3 parts is all you really need:

1. List all information items described in the RFP that should be addressed in your need statement

2. Define the kinds of data you need to collect

3. List potential sources you could search to find the data

A worksheet you can use to develop your data collection plan is on the right. A complete copy of this (and all forms in this book) can be found in the Forms Appendix and on the CD in the front pocket of this workbook.

Need Statement Data Collection Worksheet

Program: *Yourtown Community Response Initiative*

List all information/items described in the RFP that must be addressed in your Need Statement.	Define the kinds of data or other information you need to collect to address each item in this column.	List potential sources you could search to find the data or other information listed in this column.
Demographics and economics of community being targeted for service.	Racial mix	Census
	Employment and poverty rates	Labor Department
	Income levels	Labor Department
Define in detail specific needs of the community — using hard evidence that the needs exist.	Education levels, school quality	Education Department
	Teen pregnancy, single parents	Social Services Department

SECTION THREE: NEED STATEMENT

Collect Your Data

- Collect data, statistics and other information that addresses the need issues described in the RFP

Once you have a completed data collection worksheet, you can begin your search for the evidence that proves the need for your program. You can evaluate all of the information you find by asking these straightforward questions:

- How old is the data? Is it the most up-to-date data available?

- What is the source of the data? Is this source a recognized and reliable source for this kind of information?

- How closely does this data address the need issues described in the RFP? Is it easy to make the connection between this data and the needs described in the RFP?

- Does your data define the specific need of the target population in your community?

You want to collect data that is clear and convincing. The connection between your data and the need should be obvious. Most importantly, your data needs to define the specific need of the target population in your community.

Sometimes you may have to explain to the reader how your data supports a particular need, but it should not require much thought to understand how the connection.

National and State figures may be helpful for comparison purposes but should not be used by themselves. Data from neighboring communities might be useful also for comparison purposes, but should not be used to describe the need in your community.

KEY POINT

Convincing the Reader

You can write a serious need statement without being overly emotional or hopeless. Your need statement should leave the reader with a sense of optimism and hope. It should convince the reader that you understand this serious problem (need), you are confident that your program is a logical and reasonable way to confront the problem and there are no services currently available to meet this community need.

STEP 1 \ STEP 2 \ STEP 3 \ **STEP 4**

Write a Convincing Need Statement

• Use your data and program expertise to build a strong case for your program

Carefully choose your words to make sure you convey the seriousness of the situation. You should describe how your community is being negatively affected by this problem and provide evidence that the target population in your community actually will use your program services. Serious language combined with convincing data will make a lasting impression on the readers.

SECTION THREE: NEED STATEMENT

c. Good and Poor Need Statement Examples

Look at the following *need statement* examples – a *good* example and a *poor* example.

The good example is complete and specific. It identifies a specific target population for the (After-school) program and it provides a solid list of local area statistics and facts that demonstrate a real need for the program. Notice also that this good example is not long and complicated — it is short and easy to understand.

NEED STATEMENT – GOOD EXAMPLE

Like many urban areas today, Anywhere City is faced with the challenge of creating a public education system that addresses the unique needs of inner-city kids. In our city, there are many hurdles for at-risk children to overcome on the path to receiving a good education and creating better lives for themselves. Recent poverty, crime and education statistics for our city and our target student population paint a grim picture:

General Area Statistics

• 20% of students in our public schools do not advance to the next grade each year

• 55% of our students come from single-parent households

• Nearly 20% of the Anywhere City population is functionally illiterate, compared to 12% nationally

• Juvenile arrests made up nearly 30% of Anywhere City arrests last year

Target Student Population Statistics

• The target student population for our program attends Anywhere City Middle School. This school has been labeled "Academically Unacceptable" by the State Department of Education based on its 2002 School Performance Score. This label means test performance is substantially below the state average

• Nearly 50% of students at Anywhere City Middle read below grade level

• Nearly 85% of the students in Anywhere City Middle School come from extremely low or very low income level households (defined as less than 50% of the median family income)

This information clearly shows that students at Anywhere City Middle School are faced with serious challenges that could prevent many of them from breaking out of the cycle of poverty and despair. The data shows that the target students for our program face a high level of economic and social distress. They attend a school that has been labeled "Academically Unacceptable."

Also, these low-income families are mostly unable to pay for tutoring or After-school programs that teach important life skills and offer extra-curricular activities such as sports, art or music.

Our recent survey of Anywhere City Middle School parents indicates that over 50% of students are being left unsupervised for at least 2 hours after school each day. That same survey tells us that 85% of parents would send their children to a convenient After-school program where they could receive help with their schoolwork. Our surveyed parents indicate (and the school administration confirms) that there is no other After-school program available to Anywhere City Middle School students.

Educational research has demonstrated that the amount of time students spend on schoolwork is a good predictor of learning and performance on achievement tests. Our After-school program is designed to provide that additional time where Anywhere City Middle School students will be given the opportunity to learn and grow in a structured, supportive and safe environment.

KEY POINT

Create Balance

The best need statements present a balanced view of the community problem — they document clearly specific needs that deserve attention without exaggerating the problems or making unsubstantiated claims.

NEED STATEMENT – POOR EXAMPLE

Like many urban areas today, Anywhere City is faced with the challenge of creating a public education system that addresses the unique demands of inner-city kids. There are many hurdles for at-risk children to overcome on the path to receiving a good education and creating better lives for themselves.

Students need to have a place to go to after school where they can be safe and receive help with schoolwork. Our program offers such a place. Students can come to our After-school program to learn life skills and improve their academic standing.

However, our organization needs money and resources to offer these much needed benefits to troubled youth. Without these resources it is likely that many students will have nowhere to go to learn important life skills and succeed in school. Things are so bad in Anywhere City that the situation is all but hopeless unless we can help these kids.

The poor example is incomplete – it does not provide the same level of detail found in the good example. It does not specifically identify the target population and it does not provide any hard evidence (data, statistics) to support its argument that the program is needed by the community.

d. Traps to Avoid (What Not to Do)

- Do not assume that everyone understands the need for your program as well as you do. Even if it seems obvious to you, take the time to carefully describe the problems and support your arguments with hard evidence.

- Do not make bold emotional statements that can not be supported by the data you are presenting. This will give the impression that you are exaggerating the real need or that the problem is too overwhelming.

- Do not overwhelm the reader with a lot of national, regional or statewide data. Use this kind of data as background information only. The most convincing data will be local area data that describes the need of your target population.

- Do not describe the need in terms of your organization's need for funding. Do not make the argument that you need the funding to continue operations. The funder's primary concern is funding programs that are needed by the community. Keep the focus on the needs of the local community.

- Do not state the need primarily in terms of the lack of a program like the one you are proposing. For example, don't state that "Our community does not have a free clinic for the working poor. Developing a free clinic will solve this problem." These statements may be true but, this type of argument is called circular logic. When you make this kind of argument you are not really presenting any evidence that your solution (program) is needed by your community. You are just arguing that a program like yours does not exist.

- When defining the "need," be careful not to use criticism of other nonprofits or agencies as a significant argument. It is tough to make the case that the reason you should be funded is that "the other guys" are not doing a good job.

- Do not use the threat that bad things will happen in the community if we do not get funding for our program. That approach almost always overstates the problem or the need. It also tends to overstate your ability to create change in the community. Funders do not like to be threatened.

e. Writing Tips

- Keep the need statement as short as possible – 1 or 2 pages will be enough for most proposals.

- Make the need statement easy to read – commonly used words, simple sentences and short paragraphs.

- Avoid using technical jargon that may not be understood by the readers.

- Use strong words that communicate accurately the seriousness of the problems and needs you have identified. Without exaggerating, create a sense of urgency.

- Present your data using simple figures, charts, or tables that are easy to interpret and understand.

- Include a map identifying the geographical boundaries of the community where the need exists.

- Identify your data sources and include any necessary supporting documents in an appendix.

- Make sure you include a sentence or two that connects the need your have defined and the benefits of your program. State specifically how your program effectively addresses the need.

- If your proposal is a continuation of an existing program, you should present outcomes data on individuals who have already benefited from your program.

f. Need Statement Checklist

Here is a checklist you can use to evaluate the need statements you write:

NEED STATEMENT CHECKLIST

- ☐ Is your demographic and economic data accurate and up-to-date?

- ☐ Is your data specific to the problem you hope to address? Is it easy to connect your data to the type of program you are proposing?

- ☐ Does your data make clear that a need (for your program) exists in your community? Is your data specific to your local target area and target population?

- ☐ Have you addressed the issue of duplication of services? Is there any other similar program available to your target population? If yes, why is your program needed?

- ☐ Is your need statement focused primarily on the need – not the solution?

- ☐ Does your need statement create a sense of urgency? Have you made a strong enough case to win funding in a competitive RFP process?

- ☐ Does your need statement include and address all the need-related requirements listed in the RFP?

A complete copy of this (and all forms in this book) can be found in the Forms Appendix and on the CD in the front pocket of this workbook.

SECTION FOUR: ORGANIZATIONAL EXPERIENCE AND CAPACITY

SECTION FOUR: ORGANIZATIONAL EXPERIENCE AND CAPACITY

□ *Funders need to be convinced that your organization has a history (the experience) in providing the service you propose and the ability (capacity) to carry it through.*

□ *Always review the funder's RFP carefully before you invest significant time and money in the development of a formal proposal. Compare the RFP to your organization's mission, experience and capacity – is it a good fit with your organization?*

□ *Involve your board in decisions regarding proposed services to ensure the full support of your organization. Board support also adds confidence that the proposed services truly do fit with your organization's mission, experience and capacity.*

□ *Include your organization's history, mission and past and present program achievements in the description of your organizational experience and capacity.*

Overview

The *organizational experience and capacity* part of your proposal is where you need to convince the reviewers that your organization is capable of successfully implementing the program you are proposing. Hopefully, your *need statement* has already convinced the reviewers that a real need exists in your community.

Now, you need to present evidence that your organization has what it takes to successfully address that community need. This section provides information that can help you develop a complete *organizational experience and capacity* component for your proposals.

CONTENTS OF THIS SECTION

SECTION FOUR: ORGANIZATIONAL EXPERIENCE AND CAPACITY

a. Why Your Experience and Capacity is Important

Describing your experience and capacity in funding proposals is a way to establish the credibility of your organization. You are attempting to convince the readers that "*We can do this*"!

The funder has an obligation to the communities it serves to get the best value for the money it spends. Just as we would not pay a builder the full price of a house for building only one-half of a house, the funder does not want to receive less than what it should receive. It must make tough decisions about what organizations can provide the best value – awarding funding to some organizations and denying funding to others.

This part of your proposal lets the reader know what resources you have to make the program a success. You can think of your resources in two parts. The first part is experience and the second part is capacity. What is the difference between these two resources? See the *Key Points* in the side bar.

Your experience could include summary descriptions of any "best practices" you have developed or adopted that help make your programs successful. You should describe your accomplishments and define the results you have achieved.

This part of your proposal can also include descriptions of any significant experience that your key staff members and leaders gained delivering relevant program services before they joined your staff. Describing your organization's experience fully can reassure the reviewers that you appreciate the demands and responsibilities of the program you are proposing, including an understanding of the target population you are serving.

Capacity includes many different things, including:

- **Qualified Staff Members** – Appropriate levels of education, training, skills and experience. Evidence of staff dedication and low turnover.

- **Quantity of Staff Members** – Enough staff members to handle the client and services volume of your program (or the ability to recruit additional qualified staff).

- **Acceptable Physical Facilities** – Enough space that is appropriately arranged to accommodate your program's services and client volume.

- **Furnishings and Equipment** – All items essential to effective delivery of your program.

- **Fiscal/financial Stability** – Evidence of adequate and stable cash flow, ability to properly maintain documentation and financial records, clear and timely financial reporting and evidence of positive financial audits.

- **Client-friendly Environment** – Evidence that demonstrates an environment that is appropriate for and inviting to your target population.

Of course, your capacity would also describe your ability and willingness to partner with other community organizations, and include a listing of resources your partner(s) would add to your proposal.

SECTION FOUR: ORGANIZATIONAL EXPERIENCE AND CAPACITY

Chasing the Money

Too often, small nonprofits chase funding for programs that they have neither the experience nor the capacity to deliver effectively. They fall into the trap of chasing the next available source of funding.

Is Your Organization Really Qualified?

It takes discipline to review the requirements of an RFP and come to the conclusion that your organization is just not qualified to submit a serious proposal. It takes great discipline to admit that you do not have the qualified staff, appropriate facilities nor the necessary expert knowledge, but it is an important discipline that keeps the best nonprofits focused on what they do best.

You are in trouble when the availability of funding – not the organization's mission and expertise – begins to guide important programming decisions. This is a trap you do not want to fall into.

The worst thing that could happen to you is that you actually get funding for a program that does not fit your nonprofit's experience and capacity. The likelihood of failure is high.

A failed program betrays clients, wastes scarce program dollars and damages your reputation as a valuable resource for the community. This type of failure will also greatly diminish your future chances of receiving future grants from the funder.

SECTION FOUR: ORGANIZATIONAL EXPERIENCE AND CAPACITY

Summary Report

A good way to build some discipline into your decision making is to require the development of a one-page summary report that explains how a proposed new program fits with your organization's mission, experience and capacity. This summary report would be given to your board for review.

How do you determine if your nonprofit is best-suited to offer a particular type of program? Here are a few simple steps to follow.

START HERE

STEP 1 Revisit Your Mission Statement

STEP 2 Review the RFP

STEP 3 Take it to Your Board

SECTION FOUR: ORGANIZATIONAL EXPERIENCE AND CAPACITY

Let the Mission Statement Guide You

Your mission statement should clearly describe the purpose and direction of your organization. Let your mission statement guide your decision making regarding potential new programs.

The following flowchart describes each of these steps in more detail.

STEP 1	STEP 2	STEP 3

Revisit Your Mission Statement

How does this new opportunity fit with your mission statement? For example, if your mission is focused on children, a program that provides services to the elderly does not really fit. STOP if there is no good fit between your mission and the new opportunity.

SECTION FOUR: ORGANIZATIONAL EXPERIENCE AND CAPACITY

STEP 1 **STEP 2** STEP 3

Review the RFP

The RFP will describe the minimum requirements, recommended capabilities and experience levels necessary to be seriously considered for funding. The following sections of the RFP will address qualifications directly:

- Application or Eligibility Guidelines
  (Who is Eligible to Apply – experience, capacity, type of organization – nonprofit, for-profit, government agency, etc.)

- Program Purpose and Objectives
  (What type of services are being requested, how is the target population defined, what are the geographic boundaries)

- Funding Availability
  (How much funding is available, the typical size grant awarded, the time requirements for beginning program services)

Review the qualifications carefully and make an honest judgment. STOP if your organization does not possess the experience and capacity required by the funder. Also, pay careful attention to time and geographic boundary requirements.

THINGS TO AVOID

Making Commitments Prior to Board Approval

Do not commit the organization's time, energy and resources to the pursuit of any new programs without the full approval and support of your board.

STEP 1   STEP 2   **STEP 3**

Take it to Your Board

The board is ultimately responsible for everything your nonprofit does. Any new program opportunities should be brought to the board for their consideration – after a complete discussion and decision at the staff level. Outside (non-employee) board members bring a different perspective to the question of qualifications. Providing adequate time for complete board involvement is necessary and helpful to making good decisions regarding programming.

SECTION FOUR: ORGANIZATIONAL EXPERIENCE AND CAPACITY

b. Writing Each Element of Experience and Capacity

You want to present all the different elements of your experience and capacity in a simple, easy-to-understand format. Here is an outline you can follow that includes a sample for each element.

General History & Mission

Your general history should include descriptions of how long your nonprofit has been in existence, why it was founded and who founded it. You also want to present your formal mission statement here. If your nonprofit does not have a formal mission statement, your board should consider and adopt a formal mission statement that clearly defines your organization's focus and purpose.

Stating your history and mission will help the reader understand where your organization is coming from and why it is suited to help the target population in your proposal. The reviewers should be able to see a clear connection between your organization's history/mission and the program you are proposing.

GENERAL HISTORY AND MISSION
Example

Friends of Children has a strong history of helping the youth of Anywhere Parish. We were founded in 1993 by a group of concerned and motivated citizens, who grew up in the community and knew the challenges facing area youth.

These citizens saw the lack of opportunities for local youth and were responding to the diminishing support for a quality public education system. They decided to take action and developed a nonprofit support system to provide much needed help to area youth.

Our mission is to make positive changes in the lives of all children in the community, to give local youths the tools they need to succeed today and hope for a better tomorrow.

Past Programs and Achievements

Describe your organization's experience with the target population, including what programs have been implemented in the past and how many individuals have been served. Describe the achievements and results of those programs.

Ideally, this is where you want to present hard data (client outcomes data) that verifies the successes you have had in the past. Presenting valid outcomes data will not only convince the reader of your successes, but will tell reviewers that you understand how to evaluate the effectiveness of your program (which is important for the performance measurement section of the proposal).

PAST PROGRAMS AND ACHIEVEMENTS
Example

Drug Education and Prevention Program 1993 – 1999

Soon after it was founded, *Friends of Children* established a local drug education and prevention program aimed at teenage drug abuse in our community. This program was very well received in the community and has become a model for several other successful drug education and prevention programs established in four other Louisiana communities. Over 700 local teens graduated from this program

Police statistics indicate that drug-related crimes committed by teenagers in our community have dropped by 20% since the program began. Annual student surveys at local middle and high schools showed a growing awareness about the dangers of drugs. This program was recognized as a program of excellence by the mayor of Ourtown and was the subject of a research study by Ourtown University.

SECTION FOUR: ORGANIZATIONAL EXPERIENCE AND CAPACITY

Current Programs and Services

Describe where your organization is today, what programs are currently being provided, and what population is currently being served. This information will tell the reader what your capabilities are at the present time.

CURRENT PROGRAMS AND SERVICES
Example

SUMMER CAMP 1998 - PRESENT
Friends of Children started a summer camp program for 3rd through 8th grade students in the community. This program is very similar to the After-school program we are proposing – it focuses on providing a safe, structured environment for at-risk students to learn important academic, social and life skills.

Summertime days are a lot like the After-school hours. It can be a time when student supervision is poor and children do not have adults to turn to. Since 1998 our summer camp has given over 200 children a safe place to go to learn, play and grow.

Our annual survey of summer camp parents indicated that 60% of participants show improved grades in math and English. The parent survey also reports that 90% of the participants want to return next year.

Staff Resources

The success of any future program depends on the availability of qualified and dedicated people. All funding organizations want to see that you have the right people to implement the program they are being asked to fund. You want to define the number and describe all the different types of employees, consultants and volunteers that will play active roles in the program.

This includes individuals who will carry out the delivery of program services and individuals who oversee administrative and financial duties.

Describe the training and/or qualifications that make these individuals capable of delivering services to the target population. The reader wants to be assured that your project personnel can get the job done.

Even if most program activities are completed by volunteers, you should provide details on the capabilities of these individuals and the tasks they perform. Having qualified and motivated volunteers helps to highlight the cost effectiveness of the project.

For your key staff leaders and experts (i.e., executive director, program manager and other key employees), be sure to provide a more detailed summary of their backgrounds – experience, education, licensures, certifications, accomplishments, qualifications, special skills, etc. This description should show the reader that these people are qualified to manage and lead implementation of the program.

Here is sample leader summary:

Mr. John Doe is the Executive Director of Yourtown Outreach and a board-certified teacher. He has served in this position since 1985. Mr. Doe taught in the Yourtown public schools from 1975 to 1985. He holds a Master of Arts in Community Leadership and Development from Yourtown University and a Bachelor of Arts from Othertown University.

Mr. Doe is responsible for executive management of all programs and supervision of our program and facility managers.

Ms. Jane Doe is the Director of Youth Programs sponsored by Yourtown Outreach. She has served in this position since 1995. Ms. Doe holds an Associate Degree in Business Administration from Yourtown Community College and a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology from Othertown University.

Ms. Doe is responsible for all youth program development, implementation, action planning and day-to-day program oversight.

SECTION FOUR: ORGANIZATIONAL EXPERIENCE AND CAPACITY

Physical Resources

Providing a detailed description of the physical resources you have available for the program sends a positive message that you know what it takes to do the program right.

Physical Resources

Describe the existing facilities, equipment and other important resources that are available to your organization. The funder wants to see that you have the space and other vital resources needed to reasonably implement your proposed program.

Typically, the funder will not spend money building physical structures or buying major capital equipment items (unless otherwise stated in the RFP). Most funders will not be interested in building your physical infrastructure – do not include a long list of general capital items in your budget proposal.

For example: Assume you are proposing a summer camp program that includes academic, art and athletic activities that would logically require certain indoor and outdoor facilities, and other important materials or equipment for a population of 40 student participants. Your proposal needs to make clear that you have secured (sometimes through partnerships and/or leases) the necessary facilities and other resources to effectively conduct that summer camp.

c. Organizational Experience and Capacity Checklist

Here is a checklist you can use to evaluate the *organizational experience and capacity* element of your proposal:

ORGANIZATIONAL EXPERIENCE AND CAPACITY CHECKLIST

☐ Have you included a general history and background that describes when and why your organization was founded?

☐ Is your Mission Statement included and explained clearly?

☐ Does this section highlight your organization's prior accomplishments in implementing programs relevant to your proposed program?

☐ Have you described your organization's experience and accomplishments in helping the target population?

☐ Do you offer statistics (evidence) to support these accomplishments?

☐ Have you described the educational qualifications and professional backgrounds of key staff?

☐ Are the qualifications and training of key staff members described?

☐ Have you included specific descriptions of the critical facilities available for delivery of program services (e.g., organization offices, classrooms, gyms, stages, outdoor spaces/facilities, meeting rooms, cafeteria, kitchen, etc.)?

☐ Have you included specific descriptions of critical equipment, technology, furnishings, and other resources or materials available for program services (e.g., computers, desks, library, internet, software, etc)?

☐ Have you identified your program partners and described their contributions to the program?

A complete copy of this (and all forms in this book) can be found in the Forms Appendix and on the CD in the front pocket of this workbook.

SECTION FIVE: PROGRAM DESIGN

Overview

The *program design* element of your proposal is where you define who your program is designed to help, what specific services and activities are included and the goals you hope to achieve through the program. This section provides information that can help you develop complete program designs for your proposals.

Your *program design* should directly address the community needs you identified in your *need statement* (Section Three). It should also incorporate any required elements or recommended strategies identified in the RFP (RFPs sometimes define required program elements and/or recommended program strategies).

Read the RFPs carefully – your proposals will not be considered for funding unless they include the all minimum required elements described in the RFP.

This is not a section of your proposal to skimp on the details. Funders want (and need) to know what they are buying when they fund your project. This section of your proposal is where you can convince the funder that you have designed a complete set of program activities to accomplish a clear set of goals and objectives that meet the requirements of the RFP and needs of your clients.

CONTENTS OF THIS SECTION

a. Program Goals and Measurable Objectives

Think of your *program goals* and *measurable objectives* as two different versions of the same thing. Your *program goals* describe in general the benefits your program hopes to deliver to the participants. Your *measurable objectives* include a more detailed list of specific (measurable) results you expect the program participants to achieve.

Program Goals

Your *program goals* can be (and should be) expressed in a short, simple statement. A straightforward sentence or two and a few bullet points is all you need. Here is an example from a parenting/fatherhood program:

Parenting/Fatherhood Initiative

General Purpose and Goals

The goal of this program is to increase the capacity of low-income fathers to provide emotional and financial support for their children.

Emotional Support

• Learning how to be a father

• What makes a good father

• How to be a supportive partner

• Child development

Financial Support

• Getting and keeping a job

• Becoming current on child support

• Establishing paternity

• Navigating the court system

Here is an example for a teen pregnancy prevention program:

Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program

General Purpose and Goals

The goal of this program is to help adolescent boys and girls who are not yet parents, to prevent out-of-wedlock pregnancies. Program benefits will include:

• Improved life skills

• Improved social skills

• Understanding responsible parenting

SECTION FIVE: PROGRAM DESIGN

Outputs and Outcomes

Most funders will want your proposals to identify specific outputs and outcomes that your program will produce. Create at least one output measure and one outcome measure for each major element of your program.

Measurable Program Objectives

In the highly technical world of performance measurement there are four types of performance measures (sometimes called performance indicators): inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes. These four items flow from one to the next beginning with the inputs and activities that produce the outputs and the outcomes.

INPUTS

The resources required to implement a program
(skilled staff, materials, equipment, facilities, etc.)

ACTIVITIES

The services, actions, processes, procedures and other work required to implement a program
(marketing, recruiting, delivering client services, etc.)

OUTPUTS

The number or volume of things produced by the program
(number of client contact hours, percentage of clients to complete a class, etc.)

OUTCOMES

The benefits or positive changes that are achieved by the program participants
(number of clients that gain employment, percentage of students that improve grades, etc.)

INPUTS AND ACTIVITIES > CREATE > OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES

Large organizations set up elaborate systems to address all four types of performance measures. Small nonprofits are typically required by funders to provide at least the output and outcome measures. It may be more feasible for small nonprofits to focus mostly on outputs and outcomes. Therefore, this book will address only those two types of objectives and measures.

Your program objectives define, in greater detail, what your program is designed to accomplish. Objectives take the form of specific *outputs* (levels or amounts of service provided) and *outcomes* (positive client achievements). Both are important. Together they provide valuable insights into the number of people you served and the quality of how you served them. Here are some samples of measurable objectives for an After-school program and a Teen Pregnancy Prevention program.

After-school Program
Measurable Program Objectives

OUTCOME

• 85% of student participants will maintain or improve their report card grades in reading and math

OUTPUT

• 75% average daily attendance of student participants

Teen Pregnancy Prevention
Measurable Program Objectives

OUTCOME

• 65% of participants successfully complete the *life skills training* component

OUTCOME

• 85% of participants completed the *responsible parenting* component

Notice that these objectives are very specific and measurable.

Verifying Results

Measurable objectives provide you with a way to verify that your program is actually producing the positive outputs and outcomes it was established to deliver. The objectives you set up for your program are your measures of success. They will also help alert you to things in your program that are not working well and need fixing.

How Many Measurable Objectives for Your Program?

How many objectives do you need to create to adequately measure the success of your program? Of course there is no standard number of objectives that are appropriate for all circumstances. Create one or more objectives for each significant element of your program.

For example, let's assume you have developed a fatherhood program that includes these three basic service elements:

- Peer Support
- Employment Assistance
- Child Support Connect

You would want to develop one or more measurable objectives for each of these program service elements. Those objectives would be your definitions of success for each program element. Here are some examples that would match these three program elements:

**Parenting/Fatherhood Initiative
Measurable Program Objectives**

PEER SUPPORT

- 75% of participants successfully complete the *peer support* series

EMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE

- 60% of participants complete *employment readiness* course
- 50% of participants accept a job offer within 90 days of joining the program

CHILD SUPPORT CONNECT

- 40% increase in child support collections from participants

What Objectives Can You Achieve During the Funding Period?

Your objectives should describe results that can be achieved during the term of your contract/funding period. Most funders utilize one-, two- or three-year funding periods. Many are one-year periods. If you have a one-year funding period you need to develop measurable objectives that are realistic to achieve in that time period.

For example, if you have a one-year grant to provide an After-school program for middle school students, you would not want to create a program objective of reducing the high school dropout rate (even though you hope that your program will help inspire kids to stay in school and graduate from high school). Instead, look for measurable results that the students can achieve during the funding period – improved report cards, scores on standardized tests, etc.

SECTION FIVE: PROGRAM DESIGN

b. Defining Your Target Population

Your target population includes the individuals who will be served through your proposed program. This part of your proposal should provide a clear definition of this population and describe the total number of clients you have the capacity to take into your program.

You also want to describe any eligibility requirements you have established for your program and what documentation or evidence you will use to verify eligibility.

Here is a target population example:

Target Population

Yourtown After-school Program

Our program is designed for the 6th, 7th and 8th graders that attend Yourtown Middle School. The school has a current enrollment of 350 students. Our program has the capacity to accept 40 of those students.

Defining your target population includes a description of the potential participants (middle school students, low-income fathers, teenage parents, etc.) and some type of geographic or area boundaries (students that attend specific schools, low-income fathers that live specific zip codes or other defined geographic zones, etc.).

c. Defining Your Program Activities

Your program activities are the list of different services that are included in your program. Deciding which activities to include in your program requires you to answer this question: *What activities are needed to achieve the program's goals and objectives?*

Some funders include detailed information regarding required and/or recommended approaches to developing your list of program activities. The following is an example taken from a 2002 Parenting/Fatherhood RFP issued by the Louisiana Department of Social Services:

Excerpt from: Parenting/Fatherhood Initiative Request for Proposals

Proposers are expected to state goals and objectives of the proposed services and must incorporate the following best practice components. Proposals that address all of these components in a comprehensive manner are preferred.

- **Employment Assistance** that includes: literacy development, interviewing preparation, resume development, job-readiness skills, employment referrals, and referrals to job training through the Louisiana Community and Technical College System for unemployed or low-wage fathers.
- **Curriculum-based Peer Support** that addresses: responsible fatherhood, co-parenting practices in which mothers should be encouraged to participate, healthy child development, sexuality, contraception and relationship management.
- **Child-Support Assistance** that provides: practical information and referrals related to the child support system, the access and visitation program; what to do when your circumstances change; and how to modify an existing order. Proposers should also discuss practical issues like the connection between receipt of cash assistance, paternity establishment, visitation, etc.

In this excerpt, the State is clearly telling all proposers that employment assistance, curriculum-based peer support and child-support assistance represent "best practice" activities for this type of program. This excerpt also makes clear that proposals that include all three of these activities are preferred.

THINGS TO AVOID

Ignoring Funder Requirements

Identifying recommended and required program activities in the funder's RFP is necessary if you expect to develop a proposal that is in line with the funder's expectations. Ignoring RFP information that describes recommended strategies, activities and required program elements greatly lessens your chances of developing a proposal that will score well compared to other submitted proposals. In many cases, you also risk disqualification of your proposal.

Your description of program activities does not need to be long, but you should provide enough information for the reader (proposal reviewers) to understand:

- What is the type of activity (class instruction, one-on-one counseling, individual work, group discussion, recreation, employment referrals, etc.)

- What is the topic or content (reading, math, relationship management, personal hygiene, drama, music, job interviewing skills, etc.)

- When is it available (daily, six-week program, weekly sessions, etc.)

d. Writing Your Program Goals, Objectives and Activities

Here is a format you can use to write your program goals, objectives and activities in your proposal document. This format makes clear the connection between goal, objective and activities. Here is an example for an After-school program:

> **Goal:** Improved student outcomes on ITBS tests and overall academic achievement.
>
> **Objective:** 10% increase in ITBS scores for participants measured against program entry baseline (data collected on individual student performance at program entry) and measured at the end of the regular school session.
>
> **Activities:** Daily utilization of Voyager Basic Skills curriculum with instruction in both language arts and math.
>
> Daily homework assistance that supports student progress and achievement.

In this example the *goal* states what is trying to be achieved: improved student test scores and academic achievement. The *objective* provides a more detailed, measurable target to achieve – 10% increase in scores. Finally, the *activities* describe the services provided to the students that will help them achieve the goal and objective – daily use of the Voyager curriculum and daily homework assistance.

SECTION FIVE: PROGRAM DESIGN

The following *Program Goals, Objectives* and *Activities Worksheet* can be used to assemble your program design information. A complete copy of this (and all forms in this book) can be found in the Forms Appendix and on the CD in the front pocket of this book.

Program Goals, Objectives and Activities Worksheet

Instructions: Make a copy of this worksheet for each measurable program objective you have developed for your program. List the related, general program goal, the objective and the specific program activities that will be utilized to achieve the goal and objective.

Goal:
Increase the capacity of low-income fathers to provide emotional and financial support for their children.

Objective: #1
65% of program participants complete parenting education curriculum.

Activities:
Fathers First Parenting Program – Weekly 2-hour parenting meetings in the evening for eight weeks.

Partnerships

To maximize return on their investment, many funders will recommend that proposers use collaboration and partnerships with other organizations to design programs that utilize and leverage existing community resources.

e. Describing Your Program Partners

The last element of your program design describes any partnerships and collaborations with other organizations that you will utilize to deliver your program. Your proposal needs to:

- Name each partner organization

- Describe what kind of organization it is, the scope of services it provides and where it is located

- Define the partner's roles and responsibilities (what will it contribute to the program – facilities, services, staff, equipment, etc.)

Partnerships are Important

Partnerships with other organizations are important because you can do more good for the community when you join together the assets, abilities and experience of two or more organizations to deliver a program. A strong partnership can often improve your chances for funding also. Partnerships can help separate your proposal from the competition.

The reasons that funders promote partnerships are quite simple:

- Partnerships create a larger pool of resources, skill and experience to implement and manage the program. Strong partnerships can represent a safer investment of funds.

- Partnerships help avoid duplication of services – a waste of good money.

- Partnerships are evidence that the partners are focused on the best interests of the community. It is a sign that the partner organizations are willing and able to work as a team to help the community.

- Partnerships are more likely to generate greater program support and participation from the community.

f. Finding Partners

How do you find partners that are a good fit with your organization? To help you answer that question, consider the answers to these questions:

- What organizations in our community have missions and visions that are in line with our mission and vision?

- Who are the natural partners in the community – organizations that touch or help (in some way) the target client populations in our programs?

- Why would the specific partner want to join with us to implement this program? What would be their motivation to partner with us? What are the benefits to them?

- What resources, services and/or materials would we want the partner to bring to the partnership?

- What expectations would we have of our partner? How do we see this partnership working?

Potential Partners

- *Other Local Nonprofits*
  (that deliver community programs)

- *Civic Groups*

- *Churches and Faith Communities*

- *Community & Recreation Centers*

- *Grade Schools, Middle Schools*
  & High Schools

- *Colleges and Universities*

- *Technical & Trade Schools*

- *Local Businesses*

- *Volunteer Organizations*

- *Professional Membership Groups*

- *Social Service Agencies*

- *Other Government Agencies*

A *Partnership Planning Worksheet* can help you and your potential partners work through all the important issues and prepare for the development of your proposal document. The worksheet covers the following topics:

- Program Governance
- Budget Decisions
- Programming Decisions
- Staff Training
- Facilities
- Program Materials and Supplies
- Program Evaluation
- Program Marketing and Recruiting
- Day-to-Day Program Management
- Program Staffing
- Communication and Reporting

Here is a partial sample of the *Partnership Planning Worksheet*. A complete copy of this (and all forms in this book) can be found in the Forms Appendix and on the CD in the front pocket of this book.

Partnership Planning Worksheet		
Program Name: *After-school Program*		
Partners: *Yourtown Nonprofit, ABC Middle School, Local CPA Society*		
Review each program element. Define all important roles and responsibilities. Assign each one to a specific partner.		
Program Elements	**Roles and Responsibilities** Define all important program responsibilities for each element	**Partner Assignment** Define who will be charged with each responsibility
Program Governance **(Top-Level Decisions)**	• *Secure funding sources*	*Yourtown Nonprofit*
	• *Determine program size and expansion*	*ABC Middle School*
	• *O... ...m director*	*Yourtown Nonprofit*

g. Program Design Checklist

Here is a checklist you can use to evaluate the *program design* element of your proposal:

PROGRAM DESIGN CHECKLIST

☐ Are the general goals of your program provided in a simple, clear statement?

☐ Are your program goals realistic and reasonable given the limitations of your program?

☐ Are your program goals in line with the general purpose and goals described in the RFP?

☐ Is your target population described in specific terms?

☐ Have you included geographic boundaries and eligibility requirements for your target population?

☐ Do you have at least one measurable objective for each goal?

☐ Are your measurable objectives realistic and reasonable given the limitations of your program?

☐ Are your measurable objectives in line with the general purpose and goals described in the RFP?

☐ Are your objectives quantifiable (numbers and percentages)?

☐ Do you have a system and plan in place to collect the data you will need to measure your success?

☐ Have you defined a list of specific program activities that have been selected to achieve your program goals and objectives?

☐ Does your list of program activities include all required activities, services or strategies identified in the RFP?

☐ Have you developed appropriate partnerships with other organizations to leverage existing community resources?

☐ Have you identified each partner and described what each will contribute to your program?

A complete copy of this (and all forms in this book) can be found in the Forms Appendix and on the CD in the front pocket of this workbook.

SECTION SIX: IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

SECTION SIX: IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

☐ *A plan for implementing your proposed service should include:*
- *A timeline for all the activities that are part of your program*
- *A strategy for getting participants to come to your program*
- *A detailed outline that describes the day-to-day management of your program*

☐ *Just because you have developed a good idea does not ensure that participants will know about or want to use the service. It is important to know how your population accesses services so you can create effective plans to recruit and retain clients for your services.*

☐ *Get started on the right foot — give yourself enough time to hire and train staff, develop a data collection system, obtain supplies and do recruitment to ensure your service starts the way you planned.*

Overview

The *implementation plan* part of your proposal is where you present your program timeline and calendar, define the marketing and recruiting tactics you will use to attract participants and explain how your program will be managed. This section provides information that can help you develop complete implementation plans for your proposals.

Clearly describing all elements of your *implementation plan* in your proposal document lets the reviewers know that you have invested an adequate amount of time thinking about how you will generate the participation and manage the delivery of your program activities.

CONTENTS OF THIS SECTION

SECTION SIX: IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

a. Developing Your Timelines, Schedules and Calendars

Many RFPs, especially government RFPs, developed for social service programs include a requirement that you describe timelines, schedules and/or calendars for implementation of your program. To adequately evaluate your proposal, the funder needs to know the volume of service delivered (by activity). The funder also needs to know what activities are being delivered and when.

Summary Timelines

Summary timelines provide a general view of when you will be delivering the different activities included in your program. A summary timeline is especially useful if you have a variety of different program activities that start and stop at different times throughout the contract period. Your summary timeline should describe the general delivery timeframes for all important elements of your program. Here are some potential examples:

- Staff hiring and training
- Marketing and client recruitment
- Client assessments/pre-tests/data collection for baseline
- Service delivery (list each of the key program activities separately)
- Review of progress
- Reporting of progress
- Close out of financials

Here is a sample timeline of program activities:

Summary Timeline Yourtown Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program												
Program Activity	**Month**											
	JAN.	FEB.	MAR.	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG.	SEPT.	OCT.	NOV.	DEC.
Life Skills Training Modules		▇			▇							
Job/Career Options Training		▇	▇	▇	▇	▇	▇	▇				
Responsible Parenting Training Module			▇	▇					▇	▇	▇	
Social Intervention		▇	▇	▇	▇	▇	▇	▇	▇	▇	▇	▇

SECTION SIX: IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Schedules are Planning Tools

The development of detailed schedules and calendars will help you determine your specific staffing, facilities and other resources needs.

Detailed Schedules

Schedules provide more detailed information that describes when your different program services are available. Include specific times of the day and days of the week. Here is a sample schedule for a summer camp program:

West Town Summer Camp 2003 Schedule						
Grade	**Time**	**Monday**	**Tuesday**	**Wednesday**	**Thursday**	**Friday**
K-1	8:00-9:00	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Field Trip	Breakfast
	9:00-10:00	Math	Math	Math		Math
	10:00-11:00	Reading	Reading	Reading		Reading
	11:00-12:00	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch		Lunch
	12:00-1:00	Recess/Library	Recess/Library	Recess/Library		Recess/Library
	1:00-2:00	Computers	Computers	Computers		CLOSED
	2:00-3:00	Science	Soc. Studies	Science		
	3:00-4:00	Art/Snack	Art/Snack	Art/Snack		
	4:00-5:00	Free Play	Indoor Games	Free Play		

SECTION SIX: IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Program Calendars

Some RFPs may request detailed program calendars. Many will not request this level of detail – regardless, it is a good tool for you to use to plan. Your program calendar is a monthly summary of your program services. If you are required to provide a calendar, your proposal document should include a monthly calendar for each month of the proposed funding period. The calendar allows the proposal reviewers to see a whole month at a glance – to understand the volume (your capacity) of services being delivered and when those services are available.

Here are some tips for putting together your program calendars:

• Describe the day-to-day operations of the program by placing the following information on a calendar. On each day indicate:

   ○ Number of hours operated

   ○ Number of clients served (your capacity)

   ○ Number of contact hours (number of hours operated X number of clients served)

   ○ Actual hours of operation (from, to)

   ○ Indicate days when no services will be provided

• Put a whole month on a page

Here is a sample monthly calendar for a summer camp program:

West Town Summer Camp 2003 Calendar June

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9 # hrs. operated = 7 # students served = 50 # contact hours = 350 Actual hours of operation 9 am to 4 pm	10 # hrs. operated = 7 # students served = 50 # contact hours = 350 Actual hours of operation 9 am to 4 pm	11 # hrs. operated = 7 # students served = 50 # contact hours = 350 Actual hours of operation 9 am to 4 pm	12 # hrs. operated = 7 # students served = 50 # contact hours = 350 Actual hours of operation 9 am to 4 pm	13 # hrs. operated = 4 # students served = 50 # contact hours = 200 Actual hours of operation 9 am to 1pm	14
15	16 # hrs. operated = 7 # students served = 50 # contact hours = 350 Actual hours of operation 9 am to 4 pm	17 # hrs. operated = 7 # students served = 50 # contact hours = 350 Actual hours of operation 9 am to 4 pm	18 # hrs. operated = 7 # students served = 50 # contact hours = 350 Actual hours of operation 9 am to 4 pm	19 # hrs. operated = 7 # students served = 50 # contact hours = 350 Actual hours of operation 9 am to 4 pm	20 # hrs. operated = 4 # students served = 50 # contact hours = 200 Actual hours of operation 9 am to 1pm	21
22	23 # hrs. operated = 7 # students served = 50 # contact hours = 350 Actual hours of operation	24 # hrs. operated = 7 # students served = 50 # contact hours = 350 Actual hours of operation	25 # hrs. operated = 7 # students served = 50 # contact hours = 350 Actual hours of operation	26 # hrs. operated = 7 # students served = 50 # contact hours = 350 Actual hours of operation	27 # hrs. operated = 4 # students served = 50 # contact hours = 200 Actual hours of operation	28

Your Marketing Plan

To attract participants to your program you will need to develop a marketing plan that includes two different types of activities – advertising and recruiting. Both of these marketing activities can help you attract participants.

KEY POINT

What is recruiting?

Recruiting is the hard (sometimes one-on-one) work of searching for and enrolling participants in your program, finding the people that can benefit from your services and getting them to join the program.

b. Attracting Participants for Your Program

Of course, attracting participants to your program is an extremely important part of your implementation plan. Without participants you have no program. You can help people in need only if they know about your program, and if you know how they prefer to access services. You can help people in need only if you know how to reach them with a recruiting message that they are willing to hear and trust. This can be a significant challenge for small nonprofits that requires creativity and a willingness to go get the clients.

> **Advertising = getting the word out about your program**
> and
> **Recruiting = getting the participants into your program**

Advertising

Getting the word out about your program is the first step to attracting participants. Ideally, you want to reach every person in your target population to let them know about the services and benefits of your program. This requires that you understand how they access information – to know how best to deliver the message. Typical advertising techniques you can use include:

- **Flyers** – that you can post on community or church bulletin boards, or distribute to local organizations and groups

- **Brochures** – that you can hand out to potential referral sources (organizations and individuals)

- **Direct Mail** – letters mailed to potential participants

- **Signs and Banners** – located in front of your facilities and other appropriate places where your target population will see them

- **Ads** – in local newspapers/journals and local community and church newsletters

- **Personal Presentations** – at local events, community, social and/or church group meetings

- **Free Public Service Announcements** – local newspapers, radio and television

Of course the other half of advertising is being prepared to handle responses to your advertising. People will call with questions and concerns. Your staff must be prepared to answer questions and follow up with these people to enroll them into your program if their need fits your services.

Recruiting

Most small nonprofit organizations will not be able to rely on advertising efforts alone to attract the participants they need to have a viable program. Active recruiting of program participants will be necessary.

For social service programs that serve school children, this means working cooperatively with school administrators and teachers to help identify children that need your program, contacting their parents, explaining the benefits of your program and inviting them to enroll their children. This effort may require personal visits or special group recruiting meetings you could set up with the help of the school.

SECTION SIX: IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

For other social service programs that target adults, you will have to find places where you can make contact with potential participants – local assistance centers, social service offices, public gathering places, church groups, transit areas, recreation centers, etc.

Recruiting also means building an active list of referrers—organizations and individuals that are willing to discuss your program with potential participants and refer them to you for enrollment. Developing and expanding your network of referrers is a key to recruiting success. A good referral network can multiply the recruiting efforts of you and your staff many times.

Your Marketing Plan

Your *marketing plan* is simply a listing of the advertising and recruiting activities that you will use to attract participants to your program. This plan should also include assignments of responsibility and target completion dates for each advertising and recruiting activity. Here are two *marketing worksheets* you can use to develop the content of your marketing plan. A complete copy of these forms (and all forms in this book) can be found in the Forms Appendix and on the CD in the front pocket of this workbook.

Marketing Worksheet

Advertising

List all advertising methods/tactics you will use to *get the word out* about your program. Assign responsibility and target completion dates for each item

Advertising Methods/Tactics	Assignment Responsibility	Target Completion Date
Develop and produce 500 program flyers	John Doe	August
Distribute flyers to community centers and schools	Jill Doe	September

SECTION SIX: IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Whatever it Takes

Recruiting participants for your social service programs can be described as a whatever-it-takes activity. Success will depend on your ability to find potential participants and deliver to them a believable message that defines the benefits of your program.

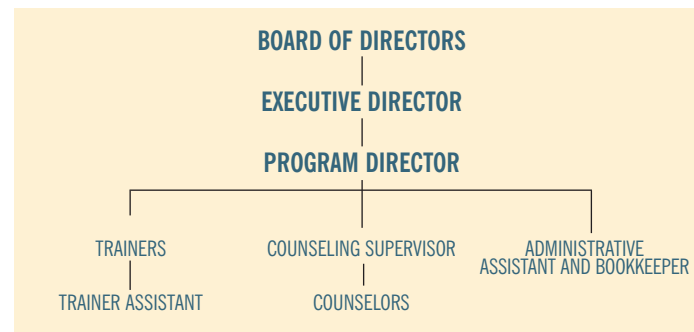| Marketing Worksheet		
Recruiting		
List all the specific recruiting activities you will use to get participants enrolled in your program. Assign responsibilities and target completion dates for each recruiting activity.		
Recruiting Activity	**Assignment Responsibility**	**Target Completion Date**
Set up recruiting booth at local mall	Jane Doe	August
Staff recruiting booth on weekends	Jim Doe	August – October
Gain referrals from local social service office	Mary Doe	August – May
Visit/contact uncommitted referrals	Joe Doe	August – May

SECTION SIX: IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

c. Writing Your Program Management Summary

The last significant part of your *implementation plan* is a summary of how your program will be managed. This part of your proposal document explains to the reviewers how you intend to oversee the staff, manage day-to-day operations and ensure that you program activities are being delivered properly. Here is a list of important elements to include in your program management summary:

Organizational Chart – An organizational chart is a simple graphic that identifies all of your staff positions (related to the program) and makes clear who is reporting to whom. It is a snapshot that describes how the staff is organized and accountable to deliver services. Here is a sample:

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

PROGRAM DIRECTOR

TRAINERS

COUNSELING SUPERVISOR

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT AND BOOKKEEPER

TRAINER ASSISTANT

COUNSELORS

Staff Training and Development – Define any special staff training or orientation that is required to properly implement this program. Describe what training needs to be delivered and how it will be delivered to your staff. Explain how you provide for ongoing staff learning, planning and development.

Intake/Eligibility Process – The intake process includes any specific action steps that must be completed by the participant or your staff to get the participant officially enrolled and welcomed into the program. An easy way to describe your intake process is to use a flowchart that labels and describes each step in the process.

SECTION SIX: IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Here is a flowchart template you can use to document your intake process. A complete copy of this form (and all forms in this book) can be found in the Forms Appendix and on the CD in the front pocket of this workbook.

Intake Process — Flowchart of Steps

Instructions: Inside each box, number your step and create a title name for that step. To the right of each box, provide a summary description of what happens in each step.

Step	Summary Description
Step #1 New Participant Orientation	One-on-one session with new participant to explain program services and client responsibilities
Step #2 Collect client information	Social worker completes client enrollment and assessment form with client

THINGS TO AVOID

Ignoring Problems

Take immediate action when your monitoring activities reveal problems (like delays in program activity start dates), including open communication and disclosure with the funder.

Monitoring Program Activities – Describe how your management team will track participant attendance and progress. Explain how your staff leaders will provide oversight of program activities to ensure that activities are being delivered according to your program design and schedule. Monitoring can be viewed as a two-part responsibility that includes:

• Quality Control – Making sure that the program activities and services are being delivered to clients as promised, and that those services meet accepted standards for quality/excellence.

• Fiscal Accountability – Making sure that the program budget is being followed (revenue and expenditures are in line) and financial records and reports are being produced and maintained properly.

Problem Solving and Performance Improvement – Describe how your leaders will address and resolve operational problems that may arise during the life of the program, and implement changes to take advantage of opportunities for improvement. Describe your procedure for addressing client complaints.

These five program management elements cover all the basic management responsibilities that you will need to properly manage your program.

d. Implementation Plan Checklist

Here is a checklist you can use to evaluate the *implementation plan* element of your proposal:

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN CHECKLIST

☐ Are your program activities presented in summary timelines, detailed schedules and calendars (if required) that enable the reviewers to understand what services will be provided and when throughout the contract period?

☐ Is the timeline for implementation of your program consistent with the timeline requirements of the funder?

☐ Have you determined what specific advertising tactics and materials you will use to get the word out about your program and its benefits?

☐ Have you established specific recruiting tactics and action plans to reach out to potential participants, invite them to join and follow up to enroll them into your program?

☐ Have you created a simple organizational chart that identifies all of your staff positions and makes clear who is reporting to whom?

☐ Have you defined any special staff training or orientation that will be required to implement this program?

☐ Have you defined how you will provide for staff planning time and ongoing development?

☐ Do you have a step-by-step client intake process that will allow you to efficiently determine eligibility and enroll eligible participants?

☐ Do you have a written summary of how your management team will oversee participant attendance and oversee program activities?

☐ Do you have a written summary of how your management team will address day-to-day operational problems and client complaints?

☐ Do you have a process for your staff to implement changes and make improvements to your services or activities?

A complete copy of this (and all forms in this book) can be found in the Forms Appendix and on the CD in the front pocket of this workbook.

SECTION SEVEN: PROGRAM OUTCOMES

SECTION SEVEN: PROGRAM OUTCOMES

☐ *Measuring your performance tells you whether or not your program is accomplishing what you have set out to do. Performance measurement is also a way to reassure your funders that their investments are producing results.*

☐ *Your list of performance measures should include two types of measures:*

  • *Outputs (levels or amounts of service delivered)*

  • *Outcomes (the results of or benefits received from your service)*

☐ *Your measures of performance should always connect back to your program's goals and objectives.*

☐ *Plan first! Before you start providing services, develop your program's list of performance measures, a process for collecting and analyzing your performance data and a system for reporting your results.*

Overview

The *program outcomes* part of your proposal is where you present a complete set of performance measures (or indicators) that you will use to measure the success of your program and describe the basic processes and procedures for collecting, analyzing and reporting your performance data.

This section provides information that can help you develop and document your own system for measuring program results.

CONTENTS OF THIS SECTION

KEY POINT

Take it Seriously

Measuring and tracking your results is an essential part of running a social service program. This work is no less important than any other part of your program work.

a. Why Measure Performance?

Measuring your performance helps you find out how well your program is working and how it can be improved. There are several very significant reasons why you want to measure the performance of your programs, including:

Your Clients Deserve the Best

The most important reason is that your clients deserve the best possible service you can provide. If you have no accurate results, you really do not know if (or how much) you are actually helping your clients. As a result, you would not have any idea what you could do differently to improve.

Funding Organizations Require It

Funders want to know that the money they are investing in social service programs is creating a positive impact on the citizens being served. Most funders will require that you include (in your proposal or application for funding) a complete plan for measuring and reporting your results.

Prove Your Results

The level of competition for available funding is growing. Each year the funding requests received from nonprofits greatly exceeds the funds available for distribution. Your chances of receiving future funding increase if you can use the results that you have achieved to demonstrate that your program works.

Your Staff and Your Board Need It

The members of your staff and board joined your organization because they have a commitment and a passion for your mission and vision. They need to know "how are we doing?" They need to celebrate successful results and they need to understand the opportunities for improvement so they can make good decisions and create changes that improve the services you provide.

Most small nonprofits truly believe that their programs help people in the community. But, it is not enough to say "We know our program works because we see how we are helping people."

Funding organizations need more evidence than that. They need hard data, relevant numbers that prove your organization is providing the services it promised and delivering positive results to your clients. Being able to deliver that kind of evidence is one of the keys to your nonprofit's long-term survival and success. This expectation is really no different than your basic expectation as a consumer. You always want to get your money's worth. You would not expect (nor tolerate) receiving a used car with a leaky engine after paying full price for a new car.

HELPFUL HINT

*In this book (and in many RFPs) the term **indicator** means the same thing as the term **measure**. Outcome measure is the same thing as outcome indicator.*

b. Measuring Program Outputs and Outcomes

Measuring your program's performance means developing two different types of measures – outputs and outcomes. The *program outcomes* section of your proposal will need to include a list of program output indicators and program outcome indicators. What is the difference between outputs and outcomes?

Output Measures

Output measures define levels or amounts of service provided. Here are some general examples of output measures:

- Number of persons (clients) participating in program activity
- Number of classes offered
- Number of training hours provided
- Number of assessments completed

In simple terms, *outputs* measure the number of things done. Here are some sample output measures for commonly-provided programs:

SAMPLE OUTPUT MEASURES

After-school Program
- Number of the student contact hours per week

Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program
- Number of participants completing the life skills training

Fatherhood/Parenting
- Number of parents who successfully complete the parenting educational curriculum

Outcome Measures

Outcome measures are the results your program participants achieve or the degree to which they make positive changes in their lives. Here are some sample outcome measures for commonly-provided programs:

SAMPLE OUTCOME MEASURES

After-school Program
- Percent of participating students that maintain or improve their report card grades in reading and math

Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program
- Percent of participants that express intent to abstain from sex for at least two years

Fatherhood/Parenting
- Percent increase in child support collections from participants

Producing positive outcomes for clients is the only reason to have a social service program. It is the only thing that really matters. You can claim program success only when you can document the positive client outcomes that result from your program. Without that evidence, your level of success is uncertain and unproven.

c. How to Develop Good Performance Measures

Remember, the purpose of measuring performance is to find out how well your program is succeeding. Success is defined by the goals and measurable objectives you created for your program. Therefore, your performance measures need to tell you how well you are meeting those goals and objectives. In other words, the output and outcome measures you create need to match up well with your program objectives.

Good Performance Measures Match up Well with Program Objectives

The following are examples of performance measures that are matched up well with specific program objectives:

GOOD EXAMPLES

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

1. 35 parents successfully complete the parenting educational curriculum.

2. 85% of participants maintain or improve their report card grades.

3. 50% increase in child support collections from participants.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES
(Outputs and Outcomes)

1. Number of parents who successfully complete the parenting educational curriculum.

2. Percent of participants that maintain or improve their report card grades.

3. Percent increase in child support collections from participants.

As you can see from these examples, good performance measures are also quantifiable – they describe specific numbers that will be counted or percentages that will be calculated.

Good Performance Measures are Quantifiable

A common mistake small nonprofits make is creating objectives and performance measures that are too vague or generalized. Here are some examples of objectives and performance measures that are too vague:

POOR EXAMPLES

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

1. Good attendance in program classes.

2. Participating fathers better support their children.

3. Increase adult literacy.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES
(Outputs and Outcomes)

1. Student attendance.

2. Improvement in support to children of participating fathers.

3. Improvement in adult literacy.

There are no numbers or percentages included in these examples. That is a sure sign that your objectives and performance measures are too vague and generalized.

Good Performance Measures are Accessible

The ideal performance measures for any program are not worth anything if you do not have the ability to access, collect and/or analyze the data needed for those measures. Before you finalize your list of measures, make sure you will be able to collect and properly use the data.

Good Performance Measures are Timely

Many funders will require that you report performance results during the grant/funding period – typically on a monthly or quarterly basis. Therefore, your performance measures need to include things that you can measure during the contract period. Here is a tip – develop a mix of shorter-term and longer-term performance measures:

- *Your shorter-term measures* will include mostly output measures (numbers of clients participating in training, number of total student contact hours, percent of client assessments completed, etc.) because it will take a while before you could expect to see client outcomes.

- *Your longer-term measures* can include some of the early client outcomes that you realistically expect to see before the end of the contract period (percent of participating students that maintained or improved report card grades in reading, percent of participating fathers in compliance with child support enforcement efforts, etc.)

Good Performance Measures are Realistic

Even though the general purpose and goal of your program is to help improve some important aspect of life (education, poverty, family life, employment, etc.) in your community, your program objectives and performance measures should not reach beyond the scope of your program and your ability. For example, you would not want to create community-wide objectives and performance measures like these for your programs:

UNREALISTIC EXAMPLES

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

1. 10% increase in adult literacy rate.

2. 20% decrease in unemployment rate.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES
(Outputs and Outcomes)

1. % increase in adult literacy rate.

2. % decrease in the unemployment rate.

Your program may be aimed at addressing one or more of these big social issues, but there are too many variables outside of your control for you to use these broad objectives to measure the success of your program.

Program Objectives with No Matching Performance Measures

Your program objectives define success. If you have no performance measure to match your objective, you will not be able to determine (and prove) how well your program is succeeding.

Here is a simple *Output and Outcome Measure Check Sheet* that can help guide you to develop good performance measures (output and outcome measures) for your program.

A complete copy of this (and all forms in this book) can be found in the *Forms Appendix* and on the CD in the front pocket of this workbook.

Output and Outcome Measure Check Sheet

Instructions: List your performance measures and answer each question on the check sheet.

Performance Measure	Which one of your program objectives matches up well with this measure? Write in the objective here.	Can this output or outcome be measured during your contract period? If yes, when can you start measuring?	Is this measure written in a quantifiable form (numbers or percentages)?	Is this measure realistic given your program limits and your ability to collect the data?
% increase in child support collections from participants	50% increase in child support collections	Yes – we could begin measuring 60 days after program starts	Yes	Yes – it is realistic if we have an agreement with the child support system

d. Describe Your Step-by-Step Measurement Process

Developing a complete measurement plan for your program involves four important elements or steps.

START HERE

STEP 1

Creating Your Performance Measures
Deciding what outputs and outcomes you will measure

STEP 2

Collecting Your Data
Identifying your data sources and creating a process to collect the data for each measure

STEP 3

Analyzing Your Data and Reporting Results
Turning raw data into useful information that defines your program's level of success

STEP 4

Using Your Results to Make Improvements
Using your performance measurement results to identify improvement opportunities and plan program improvements

KEY POINT

Use Results to Improve

Accurately measuring, analyzing and reporting your results is a useless exercise if you do not use those results to determine how you could improve your services.

Present Your Whole Measurement Plan in Your Proposal

It may be tempting to design the second and third elements of this plan, when it is time to start measuring program outputs and outcomes. But, if you do not design the first three steps before the program begins you could be creating big problems that will surface as soon as you start trying to figure out:

- Where will data come from

- How will I collect it

- What kinds of data analysis are necessary to create useful program results information

You may find out that you have one or more of the following problems:

- There is no readily available data source for one (or more) of your performance measures

- The amount of time and work required to collect the data you need is extremely high

- The data analysis required to turn the raw data into useful information is too complex and difficult for your staff

- You do not have the skills and/or the technology (like computer software) to design collection tools (like survey instruments) or appropriately analyze the data

Of course, if you find yourself in any of these situations you can (and should) communicate openly with your funder. Together, viable solutions can be found. For example, you could modify your performance measures or locate support resources that could provide the skills or technology needed.

Of course there is another very good reason to develop your whole performance measurement plan before you start the program. Many RFPs will request this information in your proposals.

Funders sometimes want to understand how you intend to collect data and track your results. Funders may also want to see evidence that you have a realistic and detailed plan to collect and analyze your data and report your results.

HELPFUL HINT

Credible Data

The credibility of your performance reports relies significantly on the credibility of your data sources. Make sure your data is current and your sources are recognized and reputable.

Here is a *Performance Measurement Design Worksheet* you can use to help you design and document your measurement process. This worksheet also helps you assign responsibilities. Use a separate worksheet to develop each performance measure.

A complete copy of this (and all forms in this book) can be found in the *Forms Appendix* and on the CD in the front pocket of this workbook.

Performance Measurement Design Worksheet

Performance Measure: *% of participants that improve their report card grades.*

Program Objective: *This measure matches to the following program objective(s).*

90% of participants improve their report card grades.

Data Source: *Describe the data you will need to collect and the source(s) of this data.*

Data	Source(s)
Six-week report cards for each participant	*Child/Parent*

e. Program Outcomes Checklist

Here is a checklist you can use to evaluate the *Program Outcomes* element of your proposal:

PROGRAM OUTCOMES CHECKLIST

☐ Do your performance measures include short-term output measures that can be measured in the early stages of your contract period?

☐ Do your performance measures include longer-term outcome measures that can be measured during the contract period?

☐ Does each one of your performance measures match well with at least one of your program objectives?

☐ Are your performance measures written in a quantitative form (using numbers or percentages)?

☐ Are your performance measures realistic given the limited scope of your program?

☐ Have you identified available sources that will provide you the data you will need to collect?

☐ Have you designed your data collection procedures?

☐ Do you know what type of analysis will be required to turn the raw data you collect into useful program results information? Are you confident that your staff can do the required analysis?

☐ Do you have a calendar for collecting data and reporting your results?

A complete copy of this (and all forms in this book) can be found in the Forms Appendix and on the CD in the front pocket of this workbook.

EIGHT

SECTION EIGHT: BUDGET

PLANNING
AHEAD

☐ *Your proposed budget provides funders with a detailed understanding of your financial request. The budget describes the total amount requested and how you plan to spend the requested money.*

☐ *A complete budget proposal fully explains and justifies your need for the resources included in your budget. It describes how those resources will be used to help you accomplish the goals and objectives of your program.*

☐ *It is essential to always comply with any budget requirements or prohibitions included in the funder's RFP. Double check to ensure that your budget meets all funder requirements and guidelines.*

☐ *Your budget proposals should be reasonable and match well with the size of your organization and nature/scope of your service ideas. Budgets that are too high or too low give the funders the impression you do not truly understand what it takes to deliver the services proposed.*

Overview

The *budget* part of your proposal is where you state the amount of money you are requesting for your program and explain how you are going to spend that money. The key here is to provide enough detail so the funder will be able to understand exactly how you intend to spend the money.

This section provides information that can help you develop your program budget.

CONTENTS OF THIS SECTION

KEY POINT

Budgets are Critical

The budget is a critical element of your proposal document — it will be evaluated and graded by the reviewers like the other key elements of your proposal. Prepare your budget carefully — it can make or break your proposal.

a. Budget Guidelines and Instructions

The budgets you prepare as part of your proposals for funding will need to comply with the detailed guidelines and instructions provided in the RFPs. Most funders will require that you produce a budget summary (the numbers) and a budget narrative (written text to explain how you will spend the money requested).

The budget summary and the budget narrative are equally important explanations of how you intend to spend the money. It is a good practice to develop a budget narrative even if one is not required.

Of course, budget instructions will vary somewhat from funder to funder and from RFP to RFP. Therefore, it is important that you follow the specific instructions and guidelines provided in each RFP.

Your budget will be evaluated to determine if the total amount requested is reasonable for the proposed scope (numbers of individuals to be served and the service area). Budgets that are too high or too low (given the scope) will not be reviewed favorably.

The budget must also be reasonable given the size of your organization. For example: if your total annual revenue averages $300,000 per year, you do not want to write a proposal for $1 million.

The reviewers will also evaluate your budget detail — your line item budget amounts must be described in appropriate detail to allow the funder to understand exactly how the money will be spent. Reviewers will want to examine the reasonableness of how you allocate the budget dollars. If the allocation of your budget dollars is not reasonable (for example: too much money in administrative salaries) your budget will not be reviewed favorably — even if your total budget request is reasonable.

b. Summary Budget Form

Here is a useful tool that can help you put together your budget summary.

As you can see from this sample form, expenditures are divided into administrative and non-administrative amounts. Not all funders require this division of expenditures, but it helps you to clearly describe how the money is being spent. As a general rule, you want to keep your administrative costs at 10% or less of your total program budget. Foundations and government agencies (including the State) do not like to see social service proposals with a high percentage of administrative costs. A complete copy of this (and all forms in this book) can be found in the *Forms Appendix* and on the CD in the front pocket of this workbook.

Summary Budget Form

Organization	Your Organization	Program	XYZ After-school

	Administrative Amount	Non-Administrative Amount	Total Amount
Salaries	$6,250.00	$2,250.00	$8,500.00
Employee Benefits	$1,190.00	$560.00	$1,750.00
Purchased Professional And Technical Services	$0	$82,100.00	$82,100.00
Purchased Property Services	$0	$825.00	$825.00
Other Purchased Services	$750.00	$18,800.00	$19,550.00
Supplies	$0	$55,000.00	$55,000.00
Property	$0	$0	$0
Other	$0	$0	$0

Ask for Help

Before you put together your budget for a new program, try to contact some other nonprofits that have expereince with that particular type of program. Their experience could help you avoid critical budgeting errors.

What are administrative costs? Here are general guidelines to follow for defining administrative and non-administrative costs:

Administrative Costs

- General administration or coordination of program, including accounting and payroll functions

- Salaries and indirect costs associated with performing administrative functions

- Supplies, equipment, travel, postage, utilities and office space related to the administration of the program

- Activities related to eligibility determinations

- Preparation of program plan, budget and schedules

- Program monitoring

Non-Administrative Costs

- Direct cost of providing program services including client activities, assessment, case management, etc.

- Salaries and indirect costs associated with performing services functions

- Supplies, equipment, travel, postage, utilities and office space related to the performing of services functions

- Evaluations and audits of services functions

- Technology/management information systems not related to payroll, personnel or other administrative functions

As you can see from the *Summary Budget Form*, the budget expenditures are divided into a few key categories. Here is a description of what kinds of specific expenses could be included in each category:

Salaries

- Total amount of salaries, wages, stipends, etc. to be paid to program personnel.

- Be sure to include salaries as they relate to the proposed program. For example, an executive director may also have responsibilities in other programs or services you offer. In this case include only that portion of the executive director's total salary that equals the amount of time that will be spent on this program.

Employee Benefits

- Total amount of appropriate employee benefits for program personnel.

Purchased Professional and Technical Services

- Total amount of professional and technical services including banking services, data processing and software licenses when purchased as part of the contract from the vendor or contractor, etc.

Purchased Property Services

- Total amount of property services including custodial services, lawn care repairs, cleaning services, rentals, repairs, lease and maintenance, vehicle maintenance, renovations and internet wiring (contracted with an outside vendor), etc.

Other Purchased Services

- Total amount of other purchased services including postage, telephone, printing, transportation, field trips, lodging, etc.

Supplies

- Total amount of program supplies including instructional materials (software), informational materials, reference books, binding and repairs, food (when purchased from outside vendor), energy, office supplies of an expendable nature, etc.

Property

- Total amount of property/equipment purchased specifically for the program.

Other

- Total cost of all other necessary goods and services not included in the other line items.

Ignoring Budget Instructions

Some funders will require specific budget summary formats that are different from the budget summary form provided in this book. If they do provide specific budget format guidelines, always follow the instructions issued by the funder.

c. Budget Narrative (detail)

Most funders will ask you to provide a *budget narrative* in addition to the *budget summary*. Here are general instructions for completing your budget narrative.

Salaries

Give the detail of how the total amount of salaries, wages, stipends, sabbaticals, etc., to be paid to program personnel. Give length of employment, number of months (weeks, hours) to be paid and amount per month (week, hour). For new positions, list the names and/or titles of employees; give a brief job description of each. Salaries must be in line with those in similar positions within the community.

Employee Benefits

Give the detail of how the total amount of appropriate employee benefits for program personnel. Benefits must be subdivided by type (e.g. social security, unemployment compensation, etc.) and a breakdown of rates charged, identified by type. (**Note**: For contractual employees, you should obtain a ruling from the Internal Revenue Service regarding fringe benefits.)

Purchased Professional and Technical Services

Give a breakdown of services to be rendered, all related expenses covered by the contract, the number of days or hours, and rate per hour or day. Examples of items included, but not limited to, in this category are banking services, data processing, software licenses when purchased as part of the contract from the vendor or contractor, etc. *(Budget any required audit services under this object code. If your organization receives a total of $300,000 or more in Federal funds within a single fiscal year, you must budget for an audit and have one performed.)*

Purchased Property Services

Give a breakdown of services to be provided by persons other than your employees. Examples of items in this category include custodial services, lawn care repairs, cleaning services, rentals, repairs, lease and maintenance, vehicle maintenance, renovations when contracted with outside vendor, etc. Internet wiring contracted to an outside vendor should be budgeted in this category.

Other Purchased Services

Give a breakdown and a detailed description of all the following cost items: postage, telephone, printing, cablevision, operational allowance for bus drivers, subscriptions, transportation, field trips including food purchases, lodging, subsistence, registration fees, amount paid for workshops, in-services (e.g., food, rental of room, other charges associated with workshops purchased from the same vendor) and related items incurred by employees who are traveling on official business for the program.

Supplies

Give a breakdown and a detailed description of all the following cost items: reference books, binding and repairs, food (when purchased from outside vendor), energy, office supplies of an expendable nature, etc. Instructional materials (software) and informational materials are also included.

Other

Give a breakdown and a detailed description of all other goods and services not otherwise classified in the other key categories.

d. Developing Your Budget

The budget summary and narrative give you a general idea of what kind of financial detail funders expect in the budget section of your proposal document. But, exactly how do you go about developing your budget? Think of program budget development as a basic four-step process:

START HERE

STEP 1   **Identify and Study**   • All budget instructions and guidelines in the RFP

STEP 2   **Make a Final Decision**   • Determine how many program participants you will budget for

STEP 3   **Build Your Cost Detail**   • Develop your detailed line item expenses for each key expense category

STEP 4   **Total Your Expenses**   • Complete your *summary budget form* and your *budget narrative*

THINGS TO AVOID

If you are seeking State TANF* funds for your program, the following are not generally considered allowable costs under TANF, even if they are related to program operations.

- *Purchase of vehicles*

- *Renovation, construction or purchase of a building used for program operations*

- *Payment of bad debts or interest payments as a result of credit agreements*

- *Medical services*

- *Purchase of alcohol*

* TANF - Temporary Assistance to Needy Families

| STEP 1 | STEP 2 | STEP 3 | STEP 4 |

Identify and Study

- All budget instructions and guidelines in the RFP

You will find some variations in the budget guidelines and instructions from one funder to another. Therefore, it is important that you identify and follow the specific instructions, guidelines and requirements included in each funding opportunity.

Here is a suggestion to help you. Read the budget instructions carefully and create your own budget check list of all guidelines and requirements in the RFP. As you develop your budget, check off any requirements or guidelines that you have met. When your budget is complete you should have all items on your list checked off. If not, go back and make the necessary changes to comply with any items still not checked off your list.

STEP 1   **STEP 2**   STEP 3   STEP 4

Make a Final Decision

- Determine how many program participants you will budget for

Your first budgeting decision is to finalize the number of clients you will budget for. Before you make decisions about your staffing and materials requirements, you must decide how many clients you plan to enroll in your program. There are two critical considerations that can guide your decision:

1. Your realistic capacity limits (facilities, equipment, staff, etc.)

2. Your estimate of local demand for your program.

Both of these considerations should impact your determination about number of clients you will budget for. For example, if you have a facility that will only accommodate 25 students for an After-school program, then 25 students would be the limit of your capacity. Enrolling a greater number of students will result in dissatisfaction followed by program dropouts – and a damaged reputation for your organization.

You also want to make sure that there is enough client demand for the program to fill your available openings. Otherwise, your budget will be overstated and your initial expenses will be too high for the amount of service you will be providing.

KEY POINT

Focus Budget on Client Services

Your budget summary and budget narrative should demonstrate a clear focus on providing client services. Funders want to know how their money is helping your clients.

STEP 1   STEP 2   **STEP 3**   STEP 4

Build Your Cost Detail

• Develop your detailed line item expenses for each key expense category

Once you have a final number of clients that you will budget for, you can start creating your detailed list of line item program expenses. Develop the line item expense details for each key expense category (Salaries, Employee Benefits, Purchased Professional and Technical Services, etc.).

For each line item you develop, separate your administrative amounts from your non-administrative amounts, using the administrative/non-administrative definitions provided.

This budget details you develop here is the kind of information that you will need to provide in your *budget narrative*. After you have developed all of your line item expenses, compare your administrative amount total to your non-administrative amount total. Consider making appropriate expense reductions if your administrative total is greater than 10% of your total budget.

STEP 1 \ STEP 2 \ STEP 3 \ **STEP 4**

Total Your Expenses

- Complete your *summary budget form* and your *budget narrative*

You now have the detailed information you need to complete the *summary budget form* and to write your *budget narrative*. As described earlier in this section, your budget narrative provides the crucial details that allows the funder to understand how you intend to spend the funds requested.

e. Budget Checklist

Here is a checklist you can use to evaluate the *budget* element of your proposal:

BUDGET CHECKLIST

☐ Have you developed a check sheet of specific budget instructions included in the RFP?

☐ Have you determined the exact number of clients you will plan and budget for? Did you arrive at that number by considering the limits of your resource capacity and a realistic estimate of local demand for your program?

☐ Have you developed line item budget details for each expense category that is relevant to your program?

☐ Have you developed these budget details based upon the number of clients you plan to enroll?

☐ Are your detailed line items separated between administrative and non-administrative amounts?

☐ Is the total of your administrative amounts under 10% of your total budget expenses? In other words, is the total of your non-administrative amounts equal to or greater than 90% of your total budget?

☐ Have you completed the *summary budget form*? Do the totals (by expense category and grand total) on this form balance with the totals from the detailed expense list?

☐ Have you double-checked your arithmetic to make sure your numbers are balanced and correct?

☐ Is the size of your budget reasonable for the type and volume of services you are proposing?

A complete copy of this (and all forms in this book) can be found in the Forms Appendix and on the CD in the front pocket of this workbook.